



*Secrets of the
Beyond*

Secrets of the Beyond by finndlardinya

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Summary: Mike caught a glimpse of what was behind it; a dark, terrifying, shadow - before everything faded to black... Four months after El has closed the gate, the kids have settled into a more normal life. But the Mind Flayer has other ideas, he's grown stronger, more sinister. He won't let the girl get away with what she's done, he wants revenge. And he knows exactly how to get it...

1. Chapter 1

Hey, everyone!

Welcome to phieillydinyia 's and BCI603 's first story!

It's phieilly here (cuz BCI apparently hates A/Ns on the first chapter) - so I'd just like to say: thank you for clicking on this. I know there's a lot of fluff at the beginning, but there's more suspense in later chapters so... enjoy the fluff. It contains Funny Dustin anyway.

Mike Wheeler waited somewhat impatiently outside his house, leaning against the bricked wall, eyes scanning the quiet road in search of a certain car.

Lucas, Will and Dustin were waiting with him as well, if you could honestly call it waiting.

Lucas and Dustin were caught up in a wrestling match, rolling around on the grass, while Will stood by the side and cheered on whoever happened to be winning.

Mike rolled his eyes at their childishness, but even *he* couldn't stop a wide grin spreading on his face. How could he be unhappy today? In less than an hour, he's going to see *her*.

And that's when he saw it; the familiar truck ricketering its way into the Wheeler residence.

The other boys saw it too, quickly pausing their fight and leaping up from the ground, casually dusting the mud and grass off their clothes.

Mike was the first one to reach the car as it halted in the driveway.

Hopper's fed up face stared back at him. "Okay, kids, get in," he sighed. Being the chauffeur to these annoying kids every Saturday was not his favourite activity, but not many other people were available to take on the job.

The four kids immediately started clamouring and arguing over who got the front seat.

"Hey!" Hopper's mildly infuriated voice rang out, shutting them all up instantly. "Will's in the front. The rest of you in the back."

These caused an uproar of complains from the boys, sans Will who smugly got comfortable in the passenger seat. While the other three piled into the back.

And then they were on their way.

Mike, sat directly behind Hopper, leaned forward eagerly, adamant to know everything. "How is she doing? Has missed us? Did she like that book that I gave her last week? Is she going-"

"Look, kid, can you not wait fifteen minutes?" Hopper shot back.

So Mike held in his excitement, staring out the window as the world around him became less busy and bustling, to more quiet and secluded; they weren't far away from the cabin now.

The car came to a stop in the middle of the woods, and everyone reluctantly got out.

This was the worst bit; the five-minute walk through the forest they had to endure without the car.

Hopper, trusting the kids who keep up, strolled on ahead, minding his own business.

The boys stayed just behind, in a clump, talking excitedly about their last D&D match.

About two minutes in, Mike started to drift off from Lucas' current topic of complaining about how Max wasn't with them (it wasn't all about how El hadn't quite warmed up to her, there just wasn't enough room in the car).

Mike shivered slightly, suddenly noticeable of how cold this particular day in March actually was.

He pulled his coat tighter around himself, trying to prevent it.

"Hey, you okay?" Dustin asked, noticing his friend's sudden shiftiness.

"Yeah," Mike repeated, matter-of-factly. "It's just cold."

"Yeah, I guess, but we'll be there soon," Dustin reminded him, and they both shrugged it off.

Mike's heart gave a little leap of joy when what had become His Favourite Place came into sight.

And while they were still at least fifty feet away, His Favourite Person smashed open the door - telekinetically or physically he wasn't sure - and came running through the forest towards them - or more directly, *him* - her face a look of pure joy, that it was every single week.

She ignored Hopper's loud complains to stay inside and jumped rather expertly over the tripwire, ever-growing dark curls bouncing on her head.

And then *was* in his arms, almost knocking them both over with the impact, letting out a happy cry of "*Mike!*"

"El," Mike gleefully returned, inhaling in her scent (His Favourite Scent). The guys groaned at the two, rolling their eyes and muttering under their breath. "I missed you."

"It's been a week." Hopper sighed, exasperatedly. "*A week.*"

"It feels longer." El breathed, still clinging to Mike as she gave her dad a look of playful annoyance. Hopper rolled his eyes, motioning for them to follow him in the house.

"Come on in, it's too windy. You'll catch a cold or something." He shrugged to himself and walked inside the cabin, disappearing into his room to put his jacket up.

"What do you guys wanna do?" Mike asked, as the five of them slumped onto the couch.

"Board games?" Will suggested, quietly.

"No, we've played all of the ones we have like three times already." Dustin replied. After a few more suggestions from Mike, Lucas and Will (which were all shut down), a light bulb in Dustin's head went off, and he abruptly stood up.

"Oh! I know! We can play charades! El hasn't played that yet, right El?" She looked at him, confused.

"What is charades?" She asked, her curiosity perking up.

"It's basically this game where you act something out and other people have to figure out what you're doing." He explained.

She stared blankly at him, still confused as ever. He sighed and thought for a couple of seconds.

He tried to mimic riding a bike, and started flailing his arms and legs around, in an attempt to show El.

The boys immediately started pitching in.

"Climbing a tree!" Mike called out.

"Dancing," Will piped up.

"If that's dancing then Lord you need to work on it." Hopper said, finally walking back into the room. "You kids playing charades?" He asked.

El gave him a look and mouthed *duh* (a word she had learned from Dustin) as if he was supposed to know. He chuckled and held his hands up, sitting on the couch next to Will.

"Are you trying to find toilet paper after taking a dump or something? What the hell?" Lucas guessed, which caused Mike and Will to burst out laughing.

Dustin shook his head and flipped Lucas off when Hopper wasn't looking.

Dustin held his arms out straight and continued doing the kicking motion.

"Um, um, um..." Mike said, snapping his fingers as he tried to think.

"Um what?" Lucas asked, snapping his fingers in Mike's face.

"I will *smack you*." Mike retorted.

"Stay on topic!" Dustin exclaimed, speeding up his motion.

"Riding a motorcycle?" Hopper suggested. Dustin shook his head and began moving his legs as if he was marching.

"Oh! Riding a bike!" Mike said, clapping his hands when he figured it out. Dustin finally stopped, leaning over and resting on his knees, breathing heavily.

"It's about time! Jeez you guys are idiots." He shook his head.

El grinned at Mike and kissed his cheek, and he immediately turned pink as the boys chuckled.

"I like charades," she stated, decisively.

Dustin triumphantly punched the air, glad his suggestion was a winner. El giggled.

"Who's next?" Dusting asked.

"I'm good." Mike said, shaking his head.

"I'm not good at it." Lucas said. "I wouldn't look as dumb as you, but you know." He shrugged. Dustin stuck his tongue out at him.

"You go." El said, looking at Hopper. He pointed at himself.

"Me?"

"Yes!"

"I don't know-"

"Come on! It's fun!" Hopper sighed and stood up.

"What should I do?" he asked.

Dustin, smirking, grabbed his shoulder and pulled him down to his level, whispering in his ear. If looks could kill, Dustin would be as dead as dead can get.

Hopper groaned internally and stood where Dustin once was. Dustin sat down smugly in Hopper's place.

El watched him intently as he started moving his arms in a circular motion and kind of started jumping.

"Uh, fishing?" Will asked, eyebrows raised.

"What?" Mike deadpanned. "Uh, skydiving? I don't know."

Will stared at him, baffled. "How is *that* more normal than fishing?"

"Swimming with no arms!" Lucas exclaimed, genuinely thinking it was the answer.

"Dude if he was swimming with no arms he wouldn't be moving them." Mike said, rolling his eyes.

"Um, jumping rope?" El asked timidly.

Hopper grinned and pointed at her. "That's right!"

El smiled back, pleased.

"How about you go next, El?" Mike suggested, warmly.

She bit her lip, considering it, and nodded, grinning. He whispered in her ear what she should do and she nodded in agreement, standing up to do just that.

Hopper sat in her spot and she stood where he'd been.

She thought for a couple seconds, and then looked at the stack of books and random magazines sitting on the floor in the corner. She tilted her head down, staring at them, and one by one they floated

towards her. She put a couple of them above her head, then a couple more underneath those, making a special pattern.

"Hey that's cheating!" Dustin complained, loudly.

"It doesn't say in the charades rule book that you can't use telekinesis!" Mike argued back, with a smirk.

"Is there even a rule book?" Will asked, raising an eyebrow at the two.

"Are the books supposed to be dancing?" Lucas asked, jokingly.

"Moving house?" Will guessed.

"Does that look like a *house* to you?" Mike remarked.

"Alright, Mr. Sassy pants." Hopper gave the boy a look that made him laugh.

"Working at WalMart!" Dustin said, confidently. El looked at him, curious as to what *Wal-mart* was.

"Oh! Stacking books on a shelf!" Mike exclaimed, grinning from ear to ear. He didn't want El to get upset because no one could figure it out.

El let out a laugh and nodded vigorously, the books and objects falling to the floor with a clatter.

"Hey! No fair, you told her to do that!" Dustin grumbled, picking up a pillow and throwing it at him.

Dustin paused for a moment, thinking. "Speaking of Walmart, I am pretty hungry." He looked over at Hopper. "You got any food, Hopp?"

Before Hopper had a chance to answer, El said, "No."

"What do you mean, no? There's plenty of food." Hopper told her.

"No eggos." She stated, sadly.

There was a pause, before she looked intently at Hopper, giving her best puppy-eyes impression.

Hopper rubbed his face. "Kid, I can't get eggos *now*. I have to keep an eye on you lot."

"We'll be okay!" Lucas insisted.

"Yeah, we're all here," Dustin smirked, and looked at Mike. "It's not like it's just Mike and El alone. We won't let them do anything."

"*Please?*" El begged, not breaking eye contact.

It wasn't like he could resist that look. Hopper sighed, giving each child in the room a long death glare. "Alright. I'm trusting you lot."

A cheer erupted from the cluster of children in the room.

"Don't get too excited," Hopper called back, retrieving his jacket. When he came back in, he added, "I'll only be one thirty minutes tops. I'd stay inside if I were you, it's freezing out there."

The kids all nodded solemnly, as he headed towards the front door. "*Be good*," he warned, before the door shut behind him.

Almost immediately, Dustin grabbed his bag and started plundering through it, tossing random stuff out of it, until he found a little booklet and pulled out a stack of paper.

"So, I've planned ahead, and I was thinking we could do some origami." He stated proudly. The others looked at him like he was crazy.

"What's origami?" She asked.

"It's when you fold pieces of paper to make it look like an object or an animal." Dustin explained. "Like a dog, for example."

"*Origami?*" Lucas asked, making an unimpressed face.

"Why origami of all things?" Will asked.

"I thought it'd be cool!" He exclaimed. "My mom does it, but I'm better at it."

"Sure." Lucas mumbled.

"What was that?" Dustin asked, turning to look at him.

"Uh, nothing." He shook his head and Mike snorted.

"Anyways, I'm gonna show you guys how to make a swan." Dustin informed them, giving them each a piece of paper. Mike rolled his eyes and Lucas just groaned, but took the paper anyway.

Will and El were the only ones to seem somewhat interested in it. "Okay so, you fold it like this, like this, like this..." He continued folding the paper and showing them, but Will was the closest, El came next, and that was mainly because Mike and Lucas hardly even tried. "You two suck." Dustin stated, matter of factly.

2. Chapter 2

Without further ado, here is chapter two!

Introducing... THE SUSPENSE!

Fed up of making swans, Lucas suddenly had an idea. Grinning to himself, he grabbed a couple sheets of paper and got to work on his *masterpiece*, rolling the paper into a thin stick.

About thirty seconds later, he sat back, admiring his work, while the others stared at him.

Will and Dustin burst out laughing, while Mike went red, and El asked innocently, "What's *that* supposed to be?" She looked at Mike, questioningly.

Dustin snickered, "You'd better tell her."

"Uh, um, well," Mike looked like a deer caught in headlights while the others giggled. He racked his brain for a way to explain but nothing came up. Finally, he irritably said, "That's not funny, guys. And I'm *not* about to explain it to El."

"Oh come on, Mike! Someone has to one day!" Lucas chimed in.

Mike glared at him. "Today is not that day." He said it with such temper, that no one dared pursue the subject.

Lucas, feeling a little miffed, half-heartedly destroyed his creation and tossed it into the bin behind him.

"Um, don't say anything to Hopper about that, okay El?" Mike told her, and she nodded, still confused but decided not to press it any further.

"What shall we do now?" El asked, glancing at all her friends. They still had at least fifteen minutes before Hopper came back with the Eggos.

Will's face cracked into a smile, and he opened his bag to proudly pull out the one object that he'd taken with him.

Dustin stared at the lopsided bundle covered in string. "What is *that*?"

Will gave his friend a resentful look before explaining, "It's my kite that I got for Christmas! I haven't had a chance to use it yet. But it's pretty windy today, and I thought we could teach El."

El smiled, not used to Will being the one to come up with ideas for her. He often stayed silent, and in the background.

"I'd like that," she told Will, encouragingly.

The other boys shrugged.

"Yeah, sure, why not?" Lucas commented, running to get his coat, followed by the rest of the group.

El shivered as they stepped outside into the windy and cold atmosphere.

Mike automatically put a reassuring arm around her, generating a few groans and snickers from the others. He ignored them though.

Now all stood on the grass just outside the cabin, Will began rapidly unravelling his kite until it flopped onto the ground. They could now see the kite was actually bright red with green stripes.

Will gently picked it up and placed it in El's hands. She gazed at it in wonder. "H-How does it work?"

"Okay, so," Will guided her in the other direction. "You stand this way, with your back to the wind. And... just hold it up into the air, and let the wind take it."

"How does the *wind* take it?" El asked, perplexed, but she followed his instructions and held the kite up above her head.

"You'll see," Will replied, quietly.

A few seconds later, there was another gust of wind, and the kite was

snatched out of El's hands. She gasped as it swiftly floated upwards and away from her, the colourful ribbons flying out around it.

Everyone was too fascinated by the kite to notice the kite gradually slipping away, except Dustin who loudly proclaimed, "*Quick, grab the string!*"

Will pounced on it and managed to seize the handle before it drifted away entirely. Grinning, he handed it to El. "You hold onto this tightly, so it doesn't fly away," he clarified to her.

El nodded and stared steadily at the kite above her, gripping onto the handle. She laughed in enjoyment, the boys all chuckling at her enthusiasm.

El glanced at all her friends, grateful that they were willing to spend time with her, and show her new activities every week. And even though the wind and cold were biting at her, at that moment, she couldn't be happier.

"Hey, let me have a go!" Dustin insisted, and she reluctantly handed it over to him.

Not long after, Lucas was adamant to have a turn. And then Will.

Then it was Mike's turn and Will handed it over.

Mike hadn't flown a kite in years, but with El and his friends, he'd forgotten how much fun it was.

And then something happened.

One minute, he was staring up at the kite, laughing along with his friends.

The next minute, he was seeing an abrupt flash of lightning, right in front of his vision. Mike flinched violently, letting go of the kite.

"*Mike!*" Will yelled, annoyed, chasing after it. He jumped up, trying to reach this string as it rocketed upwards, but being the small kid he was, missed it by miles.

"Oh crap, Will, sorry!" Mike blurted out, blinking away his sudden hallucination. "I just got distracted."

El glanced at him worriedly, noticing his disturbed expression. "You... okay?" she asked.

Mike nodded at her, smiling. "Yeah, El, it's cool."

The teens watched as the kite got tangled up in a tree.

"Aw, *man*," Will groaned.

"Hey, at least it didn't completely float away," Dustin pointed out.

"Yeah, it's fine, I can get that!" Mike volunteered, running towards the tree.

"Wait, I could..." El tried to speak up, but Mike was already hoisting himself onto the lowest branch,

Lucas put a comforting hand on her shoulder. "Yeah, I don't think Hopper will be pleased with you for using your powers out in public."

El frowned, "But... there's no one-

"You never know," Dustin shrugged. "And, no offence, El, but you'll probably end up ripping up the kite trying to get it back."

Lucas punched him lightly, scoffing. "Don't listen to him, El."

They all stared up to watch their friend rescue the kite, with some amount of amusement.

Mike was already half-way up; it wasn't a very tall tree. He could see the red fabric poking out from behind a branch.

Finally he was high enough to reach it and pulled on the kite. After a few more tugs, he realized it wasn't coming off, and he didn't want to risk ripping it.

Sighing, Mike stepped up a couple of branches until he was level with the kite. He wasn't entirely sure how the kite had managed to get

itself so tangled. He began carefully unwrapping it from around the branch, and finally managed to unhook it, whistling with relief that it had all stayed in one piece.

"Hey, guys!" he yelled down below him. "Here you go!" He dropped the kite in their direction.

The group gave out a whoop, running towards to grab the kite.

Snickering, Mike started slowly climbing back down. Half-way down, he got a sudden chill. The same chill he'd gotten earlier. But it was even colder - freezing.

And then the lightning was back, raging before his eyes. Mike caught a glimpse of what was behind it; a dark, terrifying, familiar shadow - before everything faded to black.

Will was the first one to see him falling.

Horrified, he screamed out, "EL!"

El turned around and gasped, acting on instinct and telekinetically slowing down his fall just before he hit the ground. She kept him hovering for a second before gently lowering him to the floor, her nose dripping slightly with blood.

She wiped it off and ran over to him, with everyone else, her heart pounding with fear, the kite left forgotten on the bracken.

"Hey, Mike, buddy, you okay?" Dustin yelled, roughly shaking him.

"Is he- is he *breathing*?" El asked Will, who was checking.

Will sat back on his heels. "Yeah, but he's not waking up."

El stared down at his pale, unresponsive face. "Mike? Mike, can you hear me?" when he didn't reply, she turned furiously towards the other boys. "What's wrong with him? Why isn't he waking up?" she demanded, tears leaking down her cheeks.

The boys could only stare back at her with worry in their eyes.

When Hopper got back to the cabin, he heard voices coming from behind the trees, as they gradually got louder. He knew it was the kids so he dropped everything on the porch and made his way towards the voices, only running when he saw them crouching over someone.

"What's going on here?" He demanded, pushing through. He saw Mike unconscious on the ground and inhaled quickly. "What the hell happened?" His first assumption was the kid had fallen out a tree, and knocked himself out.

"I-We were taking turns flying my kite." Will replied, looking up at him.

"Mike had it and he accidentally let it go, so he climbed the tree." Dustin continued.

"And he got it and tossed it to us, but when he was climbing down, he just...passed out." Lucas finished, solemnly.

"So he didn't just fall out and knock himself out?" They all shook their heads.

"I caught him before he hit the ground." El explained quietly, taking a shuddering breath, (*that explains the bloody nose*, Hopper thought) "But he-he won't wake up."

Hopper, trying to keep a level head, quickly considered his options. There was no way he could get any help to the cabin; El's safety was his first priority. "Alright, kids, I'm gonna get him inside."

He put one arm underneath Mike's legs, the other under his back and lifted him up, walking back to the cabin quickly. El opened the door for him and Hopper strided in, putting Mike on the couch, as the kids hovered around anxiously.

"What do we do?" Lucas asked, nervously.

"We can't call for help. Go grab the blanket off your bed, we need to warm him up." Hopper told El, and she ran and got the blanket. Hopper put it over the unconscious boy, tucking it under his feet to keep it there.

"What are we gonna do? Just wait 'til he wakes up? He could die!" Dustin exclaimed.

"Not helping, Dustin," Hopper hissed through gritted teeth. He pinched the bridge of his nose thinking. Why hadn't the kid woken up yet? This wasn't normal.

El was kneeling beside Mike, her eyes never leaving his face. "He's... he's *freezing*," El informed them, worriedly, taking his limp hand in hers.

Everyone was growing more concerned by the minute, unsure what they could do to help.

"It's all my fault," Will suddenly blurted out. "If I didn't take out that stupid kite-

"No, Will," Lucas said, firmly. "It wasn't *your* fault. It wasn't *any* of our faults. It probably would have happened anyway." Dustin and El nodded in agreement. Hopper was too deep in thought to even notice their conversation.

"*H'sss... cmin*," someone muttered quietly.

Shocked, El looked down at Mike realising he had been the one speaking. She gently shook him. "M-Mike?" She asked. "Are you awake?"

Mike started speaking again in a soft, hardly audible whisper, "*He's... coming*," He was still unconscious though, which scared them all. "*He's... coming... for you*," his words sent chills down everyone's spine.

"W-What's he saying?" Dustin asked, starting to get scared.

"I-I don't know!" Lucas replied, slightly panicked.

Mike's voice started to raise in volume. "He's... coming. He's coming. He's coming for you!" And then he was almost yelling, "HE'S COMING! HE'S COMING!"

"Mike!" Terrified, El gripped his shoulders, shaking him again. "Mike, wake up, please!"

"HE'S COMING! HE'S-" Mike woke up with a gasp.

"Mike!" Everyone yelled in unison.

He jumped, looking at them wide eyed. After a pause, he asked, "What happened?"

"You don't remember?" Lucas asked. He shook his head.

"What's the last thing you remember, kid?" Hopper asked gently.

"Uh..." He bit his lip, thinking. "I remember accidentally letting go of the kite, and climbing the tree to get it."

"That's it?" El asked.

"You sure?" Dustin insisted. Mike nodded.

"What about the dream? Do you remember anything from that?" Will added, quietly.

"What dream?" He asked, sitting up. He kept the blanket wrapped around him, starting to shiver. "Why is it so cold in here?"

"It's....not?" Was Lucas' shaky reply.

Mike looked towards El, and she saw the terror in his eyes. "El?" He asked her, confused.

She brought him into a reassuring hug. "It's okay, there's probably a good...."

"Explanation," Hopper finished for her, although he was rather doubtful; this whole thing had made him very worried.

Something wasn't right here.

3. Chapter 3

Hey guys! *BCI603* here (A.K.A Brenda or B)! I just wanted to say hi and thank you for reading and reviewing so far! I'm not the best at A/N's which is why *phieillydinyia* writes most of them XD.

And now its *phieillydinyia* - I've got 3 things to say: 1) You should check out *BCI603* 's new story *Collision* if you haven't already. It's awesome 2) for those of u waiting for an update on *Visage of Lost Love*, chapter eight is GETTING THERE, okay?... slowly xD 3) This chapter is mainly fluff again (but awesome fluff) cuz things are gonna get real soon, so we're letting the kids have a good time while they can ;)

El stayed sat on the couch next to Mike, keeping her arms around him while he lent his head on her shoulder.

The rest of the kids were sat around them on the couch edges or the floor. The time for fun and games was long gone.

Finally, Hopper decided he needed to say something. He cleared his throat. "Kid? When I take you all back, I think I should explain what's happened, to your parents."

Mike's head snapped round go look at him, wide-eyed. "No! Please don't tell them," he begged.

"What? Why not?" Hopper asked, baffled by his reaction.

Mike bit his lip. "Because mom will wanna take me to the hospital or something, and it will ruin the sleepover we're all having later! Besides I feel fine. I've warmed up and everything."

Hopper stared at his earnest expression before replying, "I don't know... it wouldn't be right to keep it from them... We don't know what is wrong with you."

"Please, Hopper!" Mike sighed. "Please don't mention this to them!"

Hopper frowned, still not quite convinced.

So Mike continued, "Look, I'll... I'll tell them *after* the sleepover is over. That way, nothing gets ruined."

Hopper glanced at all the other boys, who were all nodding enthusiastically. Realizing he wasn't going to win, he told them, "alright, but if it happens again..."

Mike grinned, "Thanks, Chief!"

"But," Hopper muttered. Mike frowned. "We should probably get you kids back home."

They started arguing with him until he said, "Look, if it happens again, Mike is going to the hospital, I don't care what any of you say. And him being all the way out here isn't good. Besides, you all usually leave about this time anyway."

The kids all groaned, but reluctantly got up to get their coats.

El was a little worried to let Mike go after what had just happened.

Mike saw her tense expression and smiled at her, taking her hands. "I'm alright, El, okay? I'll see you next Saturday."

El gave him a small smile back. "Next Saturday."

"Yeah. Is there anything you'd like me to bring for you? So we can try it out?"

El shook her head. "Whatever you bring will be great, Mike," she insisted.

Mike hugged her, feeling like the luckiest boy in the world. What had he done to deserve someone like El in his life?

Oblivious to Mike, El was having similar feelings.

Mike untangled his hands from El's before leaving towards the group, who were all waiting for him.

El watched them walk away, leaving her alone at the cabin once again.

She discovered the Eggos still lying on the front porch from where Hopper had dropped them, and picked them up, taking them inside.

If there was one thing that could ease her mind, it was Eggos.

Once again that day, Hopper's car pulled up in front of the Wheeler household (Dustin had hogged the front seat this time).

They all yelled a "Thanks!" at Hopper before getting out, and slamming the doors.

Hopper gave a sigh of relief, finally free of all those kids, and drove away. He enjoyed their company, but up to a certain point, and then it got a little annoying. They were quite a handful.

When the four kids walked inside, like usual, Karen was in the kitchen, working on preparing dinner, while Holly was at the table drawing.

Max sat at the table with her, impatiently tapping her fingers against it, leaning her head on her arm. Her eyes lit up at the sight of her friends.

"It's about time!" Max exclaimed, glaring at them. The boys snickered.

"Did you have fun visiting El today?" Karen asked, smiling.

"Yes, mom." Mike responded casually, but Dustin obviously had to go into detail.

"We played charades and made origami and went outside to fly Will's kite while Hopper went to Wal-Mart. Oh! And Mike accidentally let it go when he was flying it and he-" Lucas nudged him, silently telling him to hurry up and shut up. "And he had to climb the tree to get it."

"Oh really now?" Karen raised her eyebrows at Mike.

"Uh, yeah?" It came out like a question. "It wasn't a tall tree, I only

had to climb a couple feet." Mike avoided her gaze.

Karen nodded slowly, before focusing back on making dinner.

After dinner, the teens went down to the basement, excited to get their sleepover started.

Grinning, Max dug around in her bag until she found what she was looking for.

"Ah-Ha! Got it!" She held the movie up for them to see, which clearly read *Nightmare on Elm Street*. "I stole this from Billy."

Lucas grinned, and high fived her. "Oh yes!"

Will gaped at her. "There's no way we're old enough to watch that!"

Dustin smirked at him. "We can if no one finds out." He glanced at Mike, worriedly. "Err... are you okay watching this?"

"Yeah?" Mike replied slowly. "Why wouldn't I be?"

"Cause of the accident or whatever from earlier." Dustin shrugged.

Mike scoffed. "Yeah, I'm fine. It's fine!"

Upon his approval, the kids gave a whoop and Max hastily pushed the movie into the VHS.

"Oh! What about popcorn? We should totally get some of that." Will said, "Do you guys have any?"

"Er, yeah, in the kitchen," Mike replied.

Will ran upstairs straight away.

Lucas snickered. "He's just trying to miss as much of the movie as possible."

"It's barely even started!" Max exclaimed.

Will came back downstairs ten minutes later with a large bowl of popcorn, and grudgingly sat down to watch the movie with them.

"Miss anything interesting?" he asked.

"*Nope*, we're not at the good parts yet," Dustin responded, which made Will groan.

The five of them chomped through the popcorn, eyes glued to the television (apart from Will who was hiding his face in a pillow - he'd never liked horrors).

Lucas and Max had absent-mindedly snuggled up together, which made Mike a little jealous - he wished El was here for them to do that too.

By the time the movie had ended, Will was hiding behind the couch and Dustin had started snoring (Lucas kicked him awake because it was only nine o'clock).

"Okay!" Max yelled enthusiastically, retrieving her movie and putting it back in her bag. "What are we doing next, guys?"

"I've got an idea!" Lucas insisted. He glanced mischievously at everyone in the room. "Let's play... *Truth or Dare!*"

Will groaned again, face-planting the couch in mock despair.

The rest of the group snickered and nodded their heads in agreement.

"Should we get like a bottle or something?" Dustin suggested.

"Already on it!" Mike hollered, dashing up the stairs to retrieve an empty wine bottle that his parents had finished with.

Five minutes later, the teens (including Will who had been persuaded/forced to join in) were sat in a circle around a bottle.

They let Lucas start, who spun the bottle. It stopped on Dustin who sighed. "I'll take a dare," he muttered, eyeing Lucas suspiciously.

"I dare you... to crack an egg over your head!" Lucas declared, causing his girlfriend to snicker.

"Aw, *gross*, man!" Dustin moaned, but still got up to go to the kitchen,

eagerly followed by everyone else.

Ted was at a night-shift, Nancy was out with Jonathan, Holly was asleep, and Karen had gone to bed for an early night - so there was no one around to interrupt their game.

Dustin opened the fridge and took an egg out of the box. The rest of the kids tensely watched, as Dustin squinted his eyes shut, held the egg above his head and brought it down on his curly mop of hair, which a *crack*.

The kids burst out laughing as the yolk dripped off him, while he stared back at them grimly.

"Very funny Lucas," he hissed, grabbing a washcloth and rubbing his hair clean.

Sat back around the bottle, Dustin spun it and it landed on Max. He grinned at her.

Max rolled her eyes. "Truth."

"Hm..." He tapped his chin, acting as if he was thinking. "Have you ever cheated on a test? If so, why?"

Max took a deep breath, before replying, "I have, actually. The reason is because Billy and I had an argument one night and I forgot to study. I kinda left the house to get away from him. If I failed, I'd have been kicked out of the class, so I cheated by copying the answers off someone." She shrugged.

Mike and Will stared at her with wide eyes, but didn't try to say anything.

Dustin shifted uncomfortably. "Aw, crap, that must suck man," he retorted.

"You get used to it." She replied.

"You can always come to my house to study if Billy's being a dick." She gave him a smile.

"Thanks, Lucas."

Max brought her gaze to the bottle and gave it a spin. This, time it landed on Will (or half way between him and Dustin, but Dustin shifted to the left slightly to avoid it).

Will sighed, deciding on what would probably be safer. "Okay, I'll do a dare."

"I dare you to... Do ten push ups." She said smugly. The look on his face made the other's burst out laughing.

"Awe man!" He groaned and then attempted to do them where he was sitting. He did about five and gave up, sprawling on the floor in defeat.

"That doesn't even count! You barely went all the way down!" Dustin exclaimed, crossing his arms childishly.

"Like you could do better." Will retorted, panting. Dustin glared at him and shut his mouth.

From his exhausted position on the ground, Will tiredly spun the bottle. It hardly did a full circle before landing on Mike.

"Dude that was rubbish!" Mike protested.

"Whatever, it's your turn," was Will's meek reply.

Mike groaned, "Okay, truth."

Will considered this for a moment, leaning up from the floor to sit properly. "What is.... your *biggest fear*?"

Mike swallowed. "Umm, heights."

Lucas scoffed. "Dude! You climbed a tree like five hours ago!"

"I'm not scared of the height of a tree!" Mike corrected hastily. "It's just like... cliffs and stuff." His face turned pale. "Since, you know... that *incident*."

Most of them looks confused, but Dustin's eyes showed understanding. He had been the one to witness that "incident". It had not been pretty.

Mike shook himself clear of the flashbacks, and spun the bottle. It finally landed on Lucas.

"Dare," he stated proudly.

Mike grinned, thinking hard. Before an idea struck him.

"I dare you," he began, standing up and running across the room to retrieve something from a box. "To wear this!" He held up a blindfold. "And go into Nancy's room and bring something of hers back!"

"And what exactly am I stealing?" Lucas asked, taking the blindfold.

Mike grinned, and whispered in his ear. Lucas' face fell.

He gulped. "O-Okay."

"What is it?" Dustin demanded, but Mike just shushed him and guided them all upstairs.

When they were all stood outside Nancy's bedroom door, Lucas put the blindfold on (Dustin did a very vigorous job of waving his hands around to check Lucas couldn't see).

Lucas took a deep dramatic breath, blindfold fastened around his eyes. "okay, I'm going in".

He found the doorknob and opened the door, carefully stepping inside. He decided to keep the light off - he couldn't see anyway.

Lucas felt his way across wall, while the others peered in, trying to hold back their sniggers.

"Seriously, what did you tell him to get?" Will whisperer.

Mike only smirked. "You will see."

They heard some more shuffling, followed by a scraping noise,

followed by a loud clatter (followed by Lucas swearing loudly).

Finally, the black-haired boy returned, carrying something red in his hands, and ripping the blindfold off.

"I think I got the right thing," he declared before glancing down at the object.

Everyone followed his gaze, and everyone instantly burst into fits of laughter (quickly compressing it after remembering Karen and Holly were asleep).

"No way!" Dustin hissed, clutching his side (Will was already on the floor). "You got Nancy's *bra*?" Then he too was on the floor beside Will, hardly able to breathe through his laughter.

Eventually Will, managing to compose himself, suddenly asked, "Hey, Lucas, how do you *know* what a bra feels like?"

"Uhhhhh...." Lucas replied, as words failed him. "I just... do?"

It was Max's turn to fall to the ground, laughter shaking through her.

"Okay, *okay*," Lucas snapped, as all his friends started laughing. "This was fun and all, but now I'm going to put this back. Before Nancy finds out-"

"Finds out *what*?" A cold voice rang out from behind them.

4. Chapter 4

So here's chapter 4...

Hope u like it! :)

The five kids jumped out of their skin and turned round.

Nancy stared back at them, furious. "You were in my *room*?"

The amount of eyes travelling towards what Lucas was still clutching attracted *her* eyes as well.

If looks could kill, Lucas would be a pile of ash on the floor right now.

"Give me *that*," she shrieked, snatching her property off him. "Mike, keep your dirty friends away from my *Things*! Now get outta here, ALL OF YOU!"

The teens ran for their lives, while Nancy marched into her room, slamming the door shut.

They didn't stop until they were all safely in the basement again with the door closed.

"Okay I am never doing that again!" Lucas vowed. "I can't believe you dared me to do that! Did you *know* she was gonna come home at that time?"

Still laughing, Mike earnestly shook his head.

The kids gave up on Truth or Dare after that, simply lounging around in the basement and talking.

There were sleeping bags and blankets thrown about the floor, but no one had a specific bed, so they all just started falling asleep in random places (Will had somehow managed to get the couch).

Mike fell asleep listening to his friends' snoring, Max's long hair

tickling his face and Dustin occasionally kicking his legs.

Little did he know that was going to be the worst sleep he'd ever had.

Sometime around 3am, Lucas groggily woke up, needing the toilet.

When he came back, he could see someone moving in the dark, muttering.

"Max, that you?" he asked sleepily.

But he soon realized it wasn't Max's voice.

All Mike can see is darkness. That's it. There's darkness, and suddenly...

Boom!

He's surrounded by light and as he looks around, he sees everyone he's ever loved, lying on the ground, covered in blood, dead.

He sees the Mind Flayer in the sky, taunting him, as demodogs run in circles around him, turning into a blur of black.

There's a man in the center of it all. A man he's never recognized before, with a crazed smile on his face. He holds a knife to a girl's throat, and she looks up at him in fear, screaming for him to help, but he can't move.

"Mike! Mike!" It's the girl he loves, she's weak, she can't defend herself. Everyone else is dead, no one can help them.

"No! No, El! Please leave her alone!" He screams, but he can't be heard. "No!" He begins crying, using every ounce of strength left in him to try and move, but he can't. He's forced to be frozen by an invisible presence. The man laughs, and slowly draws the knife across her neck.

Mike screams. "No!"

"Mike!" He heard someone yelling for him in the distance. "Mike, wake up!"

The light began to fade, and once again, he was drowned in darkness as

he screamed and cried, still hearing distant voices.

"He's not waking up, what do we do?" A frantic voice asked.

"Go get his mom, and Nancy!"

The voices are familiar. There were footsteps, he was asleep? He couldn't tell. It was so real. They were telling him to wake up. The voice was talking about his family, but they were dead. How could that be?

"Mike." *It was her voice. It was EL.*

Then he heard the voice change into his mom's frantic voice, begging him to wake up.

"Mike, baby, wake up. Please!"

He shot up, eyes wide, covered in sweat and tears flowing down his face. Those around him jumped back in shock at the sudden movement.

He looked around frantically, and saw he was still in the basement of his house. Everyone he thought was dead were agitatedly hovering around him, their faces ones of growing concern. His breathing became rapid; he couldn't breathe properly.

"Someone go get him some water!" Nancy exclaimed. He pulled his knees up to his chest and put his hands up to his hair, grabbing fist fulls of it and pulling at it, trying to calm himself down but it only made it worse. His heart thumped loudly and he felt sick. *It was so real. It was too real.*

There was a wild look in his eyes as he stared at Nancy. She put her hands on his arms.

"Mike, stop. It's okay." She told him softly, doing whatever she could to calm him down.

"Mikey, calm down baby. You're okay, it's just a dream." Karen took his face in her hands. He turned his eyes away from Nancy and to his mom.

"Take deep breaths. Like when you were younger, remember? Take *deep breaths*. It was just a nightmare. It wasn't real." He looked into

her eyes and started to try and take deep breaths. Dustin finally came back down with a bottle of water and gave it to Nancy, who put a hand on Mike's shoulder gently.

He looked at her, and she wanted to cry at how terrified he looked. She unscrewed the top quickly and put it up to his lips and he drank the water like his life depended on it.

He drank about half of it before choking out, "Y-You were killed. He-He killed you. Everyone w-was dead. I couldn't, couldn't move." He cried. "I-I-I..." He attempted to talk but no one could make out what he was saying, so his mom just shushed him and hugged him tightly, his face buried in her hair, shoulders shaking with uncontrollable sobs; he didn't care that he was almost fourteen, and that his friends were all there watching him.

They stayed like that for a few minutes, until Mike had finally calmed down, and got up off the floor just so he could hug everyone in the room, even Max (which surprised her).

They all ended up sat around on the floor, Mike holding Nancy and his mom's hands tightly in his as he told them what had happened in his dream.

"He was killing all of you. First it was Will...then Dustin, Lucas, *everyone*. The Mind Flayer...It was taunting me. The only reason I know what it looks like is because of Will's pictures. There were demodogs running in circles around me. There was blood everywhere. There was this man, I've never seen him before."

Mike's face was one of haunting terror as he explained the dream still vivid in his mind. "He-He had a knife to El's neck. I begged him not to do it and..." He didn't say anything else after that, everyone knowing exactly what had happened.

His mom attempted to pull him into another reassuring hug, but Mike pushed back keeping his eyes staring intently at hers. "Please," he whispered. "I-I wanna go see El. I need to know she's alright!"

Karen shifted uncomfortably. "Mikey, it's.... It's late, baby. We can't just turn up at the cabin at this time of night."

"Mom, *please!*" Fresh tears were leaking down his face, his heart agonizingly hurting as he longed to see *her*, alive and breathing, safe in his arms.

Karen couldn't say no to her son in this state. Sighing, she nodded. "Okay, but *just you*. Get your coat and shoes, honey." She stood up and turned to her eldest daughter. "Nancy, take care of Holly and the rest of the kids, alright? We'll be back as soon as possible."

Nancy nodded, her eyes still frightful at what had just happened.

Dustin wanted to pitch in that they were *not* kids anymore and didn't need a babysitter, but decided this wasn't the right time.

They heard the front door slam as Karen and Mike left.

Nancy glared at all the kids. Their eyes (except Max) consisted of a mix of fear, confusion... and guilt. They knew something she didn't.

"Alright, tell me," she snapped, making them all jump slightly. "What happened. I know you know so *tell me!*"

"Guys?" Max stared at them, completely confused at what was going on. "What does she mean?"

The three boys looked at each other, wearily.

"It - umm..." Will stammered. "It happened when we were at El's..."

The dream Mike had just had didn't fade like most of his dreams did. As he sat in the passenger seat next to his mom, on their way to the cabin, the dream stayed vivid in his mind - replaying itself over and over.

Everyone dead, the mind flayer, the demo dogs, the man, the knife, El- Mike rubbed his eyes, furiously, willing for the images to disappear. He was going to see her soon.

And the man... he still remembered his face. But Mike was certain he had never seen him before in his life, which was weird.

"You okay, Mikey?" his mom asked with uncertainty, noticing his movements.

Mike didn't answer her question; he wasn't sure of the answer. Instead, he asked, "Are we nearly there yet?"

Karen nodded, turning to stare straight ahead again. "Five more minutes."

Mike couldn't understand *why* he'd had that dream. It was Will and El who sometimes had nightmares like that - they'd had the most contact with the mind flayer- not *him*.

When the car finally stopped, Mike jumped out of it into the pitch blackness of the night and ran in the direction of the cabin, not even waiting for his mom, who was yelling "Mike, *wait!*"

He had to see her. Mike sprinted through the darkness, stumbling over the roots of trees. *He had to know that she was alive.* Tripping over the uneven ground, Mike fell hard onto his front grunting, before scrambling up about and carrying on running.

He could see the cabin now, and gave a sigh of relief.

Mike slammed into the door, and pounded it with his fist. "Hello?" he yelled. "Hello? El? El, please answer! EL!"

The door burst open and there stood Hopper, his rifle pointed towards Mike. When he saw who it was, he dropped it and sighed. "Kid, you almost gave me a *heart attack!* What the hell are you doing back here? It's four in the goddamn morning."

"I-Is El here?" Mike asked, trying to keep the fear out of his voice. "Is she alive? Is she okay?"

El, who had heard the commotion as well, shot out of bed and towards the front door, in case Hopper needed her help.

Hopper glared questioningly back at him. "What do you mean? Of course she's here," He turned round to see her standing there, in her blue pyjamas, her bed-hair a mess.

Mike saw her too, and his heart skipped a beat, her confused and worried eyes meeting his.

"El," he choked out, unable to hold back his tears anymore. Whether he was crying with relief, or dread he wasn't sure. *She was okay. He had been worrying for nothing.*

"Mike?" El ran at him, throwing her arms around him. "What's wrong? What happened?"

"You-You *died*," Mike sobbed into her T-shirt. He gripped her tightly, glad she was alive. "I watched him kill you, I'm so sorry!"

"What are you talking about?" El asked, bewildered. He was starting to scare her.

Karen emerged from the darkness and ran to the cabin, finally caught up. Hopper stared at her, before asking, "Karen, what the hell happened?"

"He had a nightmare." She said, attempting to catch her breath. She never knew just how fast Mike could run. "About the mind flayer or something, and a man killing everyone and El. He was really freaked out when he woke up."

Hopper looked at the two, Mike still holding onto her as if his life depended on it. El looked up at him and he nodded his head towards her room, where she gently pried Mike's arms off her and grabbed his hands, leading him to her room.

Hopper would never allow for El to be alone with just Mike in her room, but given the circumstances, he let it slide just this once.

Once they were out of sight, Hopper motioned for Karen to sit at the table and he sat across from her.

"Earlier today, there was an incident." He started. "I'm still not *exactly* sure what happened, but Mike climbed a tree to get Will's kite untangled."

"They told me about that." She interrupted.

"But that's not all, on his way down, Mike passed out." Her eyes widened. "And El caught him using her powers. All this happened while I was out to get Eggos." At any other time, he would have chuckled at how ridiculous he probably sounded. "I got back and found them all standing over him and I brought him back inside. He was freezing cold. He didn't wake up for a few minutes, but before he did he started mumbling, and then yelling *He's coming*."

"Why didn't you or *anyone* tell me?" She asked, on the verge of tears.

5. Chapter 5

Nothing to say except: plz enjoy chapter 5 :)

"He begged me not to," Hopper replied, now starting to regret not telling his mom. "He said that he would tell you after tonight. He doesn't remember anything that happened other than climbing the tree, not even the dream."

Karen rubbed her face with her hands, leaning on the table. "What do I do? Take him to hospital?"

Hopper sighed. "I don't know. They might not be able to help. You heard what happened to Will."

Karen let out a gasp. "Are you saying the same thing has happened to Mike that-"

"Oh, *no!*" Hopper reassured her quickly. "But we have no idea what's happening. And going to the hospital just might not be the best idea."

Karen nodded, sniffing and wiping her eyes clean.

"I suggest you just take him home for now. If anything else happens... you call me, okay?" Hopper insisted.

Karen gave him a faint smile, before standing up and heading to El's room to get Mike.

She opened the door to find Mike fast asleep on El's bed. El was lying next to him, running her fingers through his hair. She looked up when she heard the door open.

"I..." Karen began, but trailed off when she saw the look on the young girl's face. She knew there was no point trying to take Mike back home tonight. "I will ask Hopper if he can stay here tonight, okay?"

El smiled, then focused back on Mike. Karen quietly shut the door.

Hopper stared at Karen, an eyebrow raised because Mike wasn't with

her.

"He's asleep." She told him, when he saw her return to the room alone. And then he sighed. "You leaving him here then?"

"Is that okay?" Karen enquired quietly.

Hopper shrugged. "I'll drive him back tomorrow. It's the weekend after all."

Karen thanked him, before leaving the cabin back into the dark of the night.

As she drove towards her house, Karen wondered if she should tell Ted or not. When they had been told about the 1983 and '84 incidents, Ted hadn't been very accepting, convincing himself there were more logical explanations. He might have similar reactions to *this* matter.

She decided it was better to keep this between Hopper and herself.

Mike woke up that morning, with a familiar smell filling his senses. He glanced over to see El sleeping soundly next to him. For a second he panicked, *aw crap if Hopper catches me here-*

Before last night's event slowly absorbed back into his mind.

El's bed was quite narrow, so the two of them were squashed close together. When Mike shifted slightly, it woke El up too.

She smiled sleepily at him. "Hey."

"Hey."

"Did you have anymore nightmares last night?"

Mike thought for a moment. He didn't recall having *any* dreams, after... that one. "No."

"Do you want to... talk about it?"

The man laughs, and slowly draws the knife across her neck. Mike screams. "No!"

Mike swallowed. "No, not really."

El nodded slowly. "That's okay." She snuggled closer to him, leaning her head on his chest.

Mike smiled. He usually hung out with El with the whole gang around too. He missed the one-to-one interaction with her, wishing he could stay in this moment forever, arms wrapped around her, face nuzzling her curly hair which smelt of strawberries-

"Morning," Hopper's gruff voice rang out.

Mike jumped in surprise and fell off El's small bed, landing on the wooden floor with a thud.

Hopper reacted by taking a sip of coffee. "I'll drive you home in a few minutes, okay kid?"

"Sure," Mike grunted, rolling onto his stomach before standing up.

El shot a death glare at Hopper as she got out of bed. It was to no one's surprise when his cup of coffee suddenly tipped in his hand and spilled all over the floor.

"For God's sake, El!" Hopper rushed to the kitchen and came back with a dishcloth to mop it up. He glared at Mike, who was smirking. "Don't encourage this, Wheeler!"

Mike snickered, walking by him and into the living room, scratching his head and yawning. Hopper rolled his eyes, sighing and throwing the coffee-stained dishcloth into the sink.

"Better get your shoes on, we're leaving in a few minutes, kid." He repeated, which caused the teens to frown.

"Why?" El demanded, absent-mindedly gripping the sleeve of Mike's jacket.

"Because I told his mom that I'd bring him home this morning."

Hopper retorted hotly.

Sighing, Mike grabbed his shoes and reducantly put them on,

El looked from Mike to Hopper, eyes growing concerned.

"N-No," she muttered, quietly. She fixed her gaze on Hopper. "Please don't take him home."

Mike stared at her, puzzled. "El, everything okay?"

"What if..." El sniffed, trying to find the words. "What if it... *happens* again, and... I'm not there?"

"Hey, kid, *kid*," Hopper gently placed his hands on her shaking shoulders, keeping eye contact with her. "You gotta relax. I can't promise that nothing will happen, but Mike can't stay here forever. You understand?"

For a moment, El didn't reply. She took a deep breath, and pushed Hopper's hands off her. "You always break your promises anyway," she hissed, before turning her back on him.

Hopper bit back a reply, knowing she was right, but not every promise can be kept.

When Mike was ready, El hugged him for a good five minutes, until he said,

"I'll see you Saturday, okay? I'll be alright, yeah? I'm with my mom and Nancy and the others, if anything happens they'll take care of me." She sighed and nodded.

"Halfway happy." She muttered, and hugged him again, then pecked him on the lips when Hopper wasn't looking.

"Come on kid! It's cold out here!" Hopper called from the woods.

"I'll see you Saturday." He stated, trying and failing to keep the smile off his face.

"Saturday." She nodded, and watched as they headed off.

She'd watched him walk off twice in one weekend now. She only hoped he'd still be here to do the same thing *next* weekend too.

Sighing, she shut the door and locked it, and immediately made herself her usual breakfast, Eggos, deciding she'd also surprise Hopper with breakfast for when he got back.

She felt a little bad for snapping at him, but she was more likely to get riled up when it involved Mike. It had always been that way.

On the way to the Wheeler's, Hopper kept thinking of ways to ask Mike if he was really okay, or what exactly happened in the dream.

"You want to know what happened in the dream, don't you?" He asked, his cheek resting in the palm of his hand. Hopper looked at him, an eyebrow raised.

"Did you just read my mind or something, kid?" He asked.

"No, but you just told on yourself." Mike replied, looking in front of him.

"Right. You don't have to talk about the dream if you don't want to, kid, I understand. Especially after how bad it must have been after last night."

"Don't people say that if you talk about your dreams, it's less likely to come true?"

"Isn't that when you blow out your candles?" Hopper asked, glancing at him.

"Well yeah, but my grandpa used to say that. I used to stay with him on the weekends sometimes, and if I had a bad dream he told me to tell him about it, and that there was an old saying that if you talk about them they won't come true."

"I think I've heard something like that, yeah."

Mike nodded, and told him about the dream. He described the Mind Flayer, the demo dogs, the man, ...what what happened to El.

"It all felt so real." He finished quietly, looking at Hopper, who didn't know what to say.

Luckily he didn't *need* to say anything, because his car arrived at its destination shortly after Mike had finished speaking.

"Alright, kid." Hopper stated energetically. "See you and the rest of them next Saturday." He turned to look at Mike before adding, "take care of yourself."

Mike nodded, starting to get out. "Yeah... and thanks for... you know."

Hopper shrugged. "Sure."

Mike stepped through the door of his house and was instantly met with the smell of pancakes.

He slowly made his way into the kitchen, the smell getting stronger.

He caught a quick glance of Nancy and Lucas tossing pancakes, and Max and Will trying to get pancake mix out of Dustin's hair, before his mom was on him, pulling him into a tight hug.

"H-Hey, mom," Mike awkwardly hugged her back.

"I was worried about you, are you okay?" she asked, still holding onto him.

"I'm fine, don't worry," He gently pried his mom off him to look round at his friends.

When they realized he was back, they suddenly all stopped smiling and having fun and looked at him with solemn and concerned faces. Except Will, who grinned happily, wiping the pancake mix he'd received from Dustin's hair onto his jumper.

"Hey, guys," Mike smiled, trying to ease the tension, shoving his hands causally into his pockets. "What you up to?"

"Your friends all wanted to make pancakes for breakfast, so I thought I'd teach them how," Nancy explained, before frowning at Dustin.

"But I guess *some of us* don't know how to properly toss a pancake!"

Dustin scoffed. "And I'm getting pretty sick of sticky things being in my hair, so I'll leave the breakfast-making to you lot."

"Here, Mike, you can take over this one," Lucas offered, backing away from his pan.

"Sure, okay," Mike took over, stood next to Nancy. But he was pretty sure he could feel his friends giving each other looks behind his back.

He didn't really blame them; if it had been one of *them* freaking out last night, *he* probably would have been a little worried as well.

"So, um, how's El?" Max piped up.

"She's fine," Mike replied, expertly tossing his pancake (he'd had a lot of practice with Nancy). "I'm, er, sorry for leaving you guys last night."

He was greeted with a chorus of reassuring "*it's fine*"s and "*we understand*"s from his friends.

It may have been fine, but Mike didn't think any of them *really* understood. Well, most of them anyway.

While the group were sat round the table eating pancakes, Karen announced she was going out, with Holly.

"You kids have a good time," she called, opening the front door, and shutting it behind her.

Nancy soon left to go upstairs while the teens sat at the table, enjoying their pancakes, muttering about homework and calling Jonathan.

"Why aren't you eating, Mike?" Max asked. He'd been picking at his pancake for the last few minutes.

He shrugged, glumly, "I'm just not hungry," he replied, quietly.

Will, sat on Mike's other side, leaned over to take his uneaten

pancake. "It gets easier," he whispered, before biting into his stolen second pancake.

Mike blinked at him, and the smaller kid smiled back.

After everyone finished their breakfast, they watched TV for a while until they decided they were bored.

"Do you have anything to do other than watch TV or play board games?" Dustin whined. Mike rolled his eyes.

"Do you think we would be sitting here watching TV if I did?" He grumbled.

"Let's go to the park. I can show you guys a few new tricks." Max suggested.

Mike shrugged, "I'm game," he said. They looked at each other.

"Are you sure that's a good idea, Mike?" Lucas asked. "I mean, it seems like everything bad happens when there's no one else around." Mike rolled his eyes, sighing.

"I'll be fine, guys," He said, rolling his eyes. "There'll be other people at the park, not just us."

"He has a point." Will pointed out, coldly. "I'm sure everything will be fine."

"Alright, if you're sure." Lucas said, giving the others a look when Mike wasn't looking.

"Get your jackets and stuff, I'm gonna go tell Nancy."

"Tell me what?" She asked, coming down the stairs.

"We're going to the park."

"Are you su-?"

"Yes, I'm sure. I'll be fine, It's not like I'm gonna be by myself." He told her through gritted teeth while the others went down to the

basement to get their stuff. *Why would no one leave him alone?* She sighed, and nodded, walking to the kitchen to get a drink. When she came back, they were ready to go.

"If anything, and I mean *anything* happens, go to a store or somewhere to call me if you need to, understand?" They all nodded and she hugged Mike, which shocked not only him, but the others as well. He hugged her back and they finally left on their bikes, Max riding her skateboard.

Nancy sighed as she watched them ride off. Hopefully, her brother would keep himself away from disaster this time.

6. Chapter 6

Hey guys! BCI603 here! Just wanted to pop in and say hi and that I have a new story called Eloquent Abilities and I'd appreciate it if you check it out! :) Also Phieilly is currently sleep-deprived but she says hi!

When they got to the park, Max started doing a bunch of fancy tricks and stunts, probably trying a little too hard to impress Lucas, who couldn't keep the dopey grin off his face.

Dustin stayed a few feet away from the two, cheering Max on and and throwing in a few jokes about their relationship (Max had given up giving him crap for doing it).

Mike and Will sat quietly on the swings, watching their friends' drama.

"You know what this reminds me of?" Will asked. Mike looked at the smaller teen.

"What?" He asked, interested.

"When we first met, " he replied, "We talked on the swings during recess."

Mike smiled and nodded. "Yeah, we talked the whole time."

"You were my first friend."

"You were mine too. Like I said a few months ago, it was the best thing I'd ever done."

The two fell into a comfortable silence after that, gently swinging back and forth in sync.

"I understand." Will said, finally.

Mike looked at him, an eyebrow raised.

Will smiled faintly and continued, "They start treating you like you're gonna break. Like you're a little kid who can't handle things." He stared down at his shoes, deep in thought. "I know they mean well though."

"Yeah," Mike replied meekly. If anyone knew what he was going through, it was Will.

With that thought in mind, Mike considered telling Will about a feeling that had been harassing him for most of the weekend now. "Hey, Will?"

Will looked up, "Yeah?"

It was Mike's turn to stare down at his shoes. "You don't think anything is... *wrong* with me, do you? That whatever's happening has a logical reason?"

Will didn't respond straight away.

"Will?" Mike repeated quietly, suddenly needing his reassurance.

"I... *hope* so," Will finally settled on, which wasn't quite what Mike was after. "I'm sure things have died down now. It was just one dream, right?"

"Hey, Will!" Dustin called loudly, snapping the two boys back into reality. "Max dares you to have a go on her skateboard!"

"What?" Will asked, looking at Mike, then back at Dustin. "*Why*?"

"I don't know, just get over here!" Dustin continued yelling at the top of his lungs, even though they weren't *that* far from each other.

Groaning, Will got up and headed over to them. Max kicked her skateboard gently in his direction, grinning.

Mike stayed on the swings, watching with a small smirk on his face as Will attempted to stand on the skateboard.

Mike jumped when Max launched herself into the swing Will had just been on.

She chuckled, "A little jumpy now, are we? Am I that scary?" She joked.

He shook his head. "No, you're not scary," he replied, looking at her. "I just didn't see you."

She nodded, tucking a strand of red hair behind her ear. "Why do you look so depressed?" She commented, noticing his mood. "Is it because I just came over?"

Mike snorted, "Yeah, I can't *stand* you."

Max chuckled and threw an arm casually around his shoulders. "Oh come on, you know you love me," she teased.

"In your dreams, Carrot," he snarkily replied.

"Oi, Wheeler, hands off my girlfriend!" Lucas called playfully, making his way over to them, after watching Will faceplant the grass several times.

"I think you'll find *her* hands are on *me*," Mike retorted laughing.

"I was provoked!" Max insisted, leaving her position on the swing into kiss Lucas on the cheek.

"No, no, *no*!" Dustin sighed, helping Will up from the ground for the 17th time. "You're doing it all *wrong*. You're not supposed to push backwards the moment you step on!" Will snickered. "Come *on*, Will, I thought you were supposed to be *wise*!"

Mike laughed along with everyone else, glad the attention wasn't on him for once.

Will glared at Dustin with annoyance, getting on the skateboard once again. This time, he actually got somewhere. They cheered him on as he slowly rolled away from them, rocking unsteadily on the skateboard.

He looked back at them for a split second, only to instantly regret it; he collided right into the curb and fell into the bushes with a loud crash.

"Oh *shit*!" Dustin exclaimed, darting towards the bushes, the gang following him in a panic.

"Will! Are you okay?" Mike asked, looking for him. "Wait, where'd he go?"

"I'm in the bushes, where else?" Will said and they saw movement in the bush. "A little help would be nice!"

"Oh, sorry." Dustin held out a hand and Will's appeared from the leaves and grabbed it. Dustin pulled him up with little effort. The dirt-covered boy emerged, dusting himself off, a pissed look on his face.

"Well that was *fun*," he stared sarcastically, handing the skateboard back to its owner, who took it, grinning guiltily.

"So, uh, you did a good job?" Max said, though it came out like a question. He glared at her.

"If you call falling in a bush a good job." He huffed, picking a leaf out of his hair. "I will *never* do that again."

"Oh come on! Practice makes perfect." Lucas snickered, patting him on the back.

"Yeah, no thanks. I'd rather not die today," Will rolled his eyes.

Mike decided to finally say something, "Well, I think you guys have tortured Will enough for today guys, let's go to Benny's for lunch," he suggested, knowing it was Will's favourite place.

Will agreed, his smile lighting up (he could never resist Benny's) and with that, they left the park and were on their way to Benny's.

The boys left their bikes perched outside the cafe, and Max left her skateboard. The bell jingled as the five kids walked in.

There weren't many people inside, which they were thankful for, since they could be as loud as they wanted, with little complaints. They sat at a table by the window and took turns ordering.

Will ordered his favourite ham and lettuce sandwich (no one could understand why he liked it).

Lucas and Dustin both went for the classic BLT, while Max wanted a burger (even though the people that took over Benny's turned it into an all-food restaurant, she was a big fan on the burgers).

Mike decided on waffles, since he was missing El and they were the closest thing to her.

When they came, he decided to eat them even though he wasn't hungry, so no one would get worried.

Of course, Dustin tried to lighten the mood. "So the other night, I dreamt that I had took a walk on a sandy beach," he stated, between his massive mouthfuls of BLT, "That explains the footprints I found in the cat's litter box the next morning."

Will snorted out his Diet Coke, while the others laughed.

"Where did you hear *that* one?" Max chuckled.

"It actually happened!" Dustin insisted, exasperatedly.

"Sure it did," Mike smirked and reached for another waffle.

Of course, just when things were happy and normal again, something had to come along and stamp on it.

Mike stopping chewing when he suddenly felt it again.

The chill.

Cold as ice, instantly turning to freezing, spreading across his whole body.

He could feel the danger behind him even when he wasn't even looking in that direction.

Mike slowly turned around in his chair, heart beating fast, until his eyes locked on his worst nightmare.

It was *him*. The man from his dream, sitting alone, at a table across the room, wearing a long dark coat. The man's eyes lifted to meet is; they were black as coal.

A small sinister smile appeared on the man's face, and that's when Mike lost it.

He shot up from his chair, the force knocking the chair over, screaming. Everyone in the cafe turned to look at the boy in shock.

"IT'S YOU!" Mike screamed, unsure whether he wanted to run for his life, or attack the man. "YOU DID ALL THIS! IT'S YOUR FAULT! IT'S ALL YOU!"

The suddenly-brown-eyed man stared back at him, a look of disturbed confusion on his face.

Mike carried on hysterically yelling, tears streaming down his face. "YOU KILLED THEM! YOU KILLED *HER*! WHY ARE YOU DOING THIS? STOP IT! LEAVE ME THE HELL ALONE!"

By this point, the rest of the kids had got involved.

"Mike, *calm down*!" Dustin was shaking his shoulders, trying to get Mike to focus on *him*.

Mike couldn't though. They didn't understand; he *knew* what this man had done. He knew now, he wasn't just a dream. It was *never* just a dream.

His voice was starting to crack, but he couldn't stop. "WHO ARE YOU? STAY AWAY FROM THEM! YOU'RE DOING THIS! I KNOW YOU ARE!"

He friends were starting to drag him out of the cafe.

Mike struggled against them, but it was four against one. "NO! NO! IT'S ALL YOU, YOUR FAULT! IT'S YOU! I KNOW IT IS!"

The door slammed shut, as the kids exited the now-silent room.

Most eyes were turned towards the man questioningly. He awkwardly

cleared his throat and returned his gaze to the menu he was holding.

It wasn't until Mike was outside did he hear the voice; cold and dark, coming directly from inside him.

"This is only the beginning, Mike."

"**GET OUT OF MY HEAD,**" Mike cried, terrified, hands gripping his hair.

It only perused to make the voice louder; a sinister laughing ringing in his ears.

The world around him disappears, and the lightning and red sky is back, the Mind Flayer; a smoky cloud towering above him, the man's face; black eyes and evil smile, demodogs, everyone dead, El dead- "NO! STOP! STOP!" And then he was staring down at himself unmoving on the ground... because he was also dead.

Mike gasped as his consciousness slammed into the hard pavement of the street outside Benny's.

His friends were crowded around him, wearing matching expressions of horror.

Max, who was directly in front of him, grabbed his arms as he tried to shift away from her. "Hey, it's okay, you're okay, we're all fine!" she insisted.

He shook his head in denial, because speech seemed to have failed him.

Instead, he threw up on the gravel, *there goes the waffles.*

"Mike, are you okay, what the *hell* happened?" Lucas asked worriedly.

Mike didn't reply. He turned back to look at the cafe, heart pounding.

"Mike? Mike - *where are you going?*" Dustin yelled, as the boy suddenly shot back in through the door. His friends hurried after him.

Mike stared, horrified, at an empty table, that consisted of a dessert menu and a half-eaten bread roll.

The man was nowhere in sight.

7. Chapter 7

Hey guys! Thanks for all of the awesome reviews :D ~ Phieilly

"Mike."

Mike flinched as he heard the cold, low voice again.

But then it changed into Dustin's.

"Mike!" The curly-haired boy protested, catching up with the boy, standing frozen in front of the empty table, the rest the gang hot on his heels. "What the *hell* is going on?"

Mike slowly turned to face his worried friends. They wanted to help him.

They wouldn't understand. Mike took a deep breath. "Something is happening," he swallowed. "And it's not in my head. It's *real*. That guy," he pointed at the table. "...is the guy from my dream last night. He was the one who-

He choked on a sudden sob, realising how scared he was. *Why was this happening? Why him?*

Max went in to comfort him, but he gently pushed her off and continued, "I-I keep *seeing* the Mind Flayer, just in flashes, not in real life. The man is connected with the Mind Flayer, I know he is!"

For a moment, all his friends stared at him in silence, unsure what to say.

Lucas looked wearily behind in at the door. "...We never saw the man leave."

Will frowned and rushed over to a couple who were eating their lunch. "Excuse me, did you see a man with a long coat leave?"

The lady looked puzzled, "What man?"

"Er, he was sat at that table," Will pointed in the right direction.

"I don't remember seeing him, dear," the woman confessed apologetically, while the man with her nodded in agreement.

Dustin rushed off to check the café toilets, while Lucas joined Will with asking the customers if they had seen him.

It seemed no one even remembered him *being* there.

Max stood beside Mike, arms folded nervously, as person after person denied seeing the man from Mike's dream.

Dustin came back and confirmed the toilets clear.

"Y-You guys all saw him, right?" Mike checked wearily.

They all nodded fiercely.

Will gulped, a thought suddenly coming to mind. "You don't think... the Mind Flayer has possessed you, do you?"

They stared at him, Lucas giving him a weird look. "But El closed the gate," he pointed out, "that shouldn't be *possible*."

"He's right but then... Why is Mike seeing all this stuff?" Dustin asked.

"Who knows?" Max butted in, looking at Mike, who was biting his lip and steadily looking around.

"There's only one way to find out," Dustin muttered, shrugging with his hands in pockets.

"Dude are you *crazy*?" Max hissed at him.

"What? It worked on Will, it would work on Mike too!" Dustin exclaimed.

"Yep, you're a real idiot. We're not about to burn him up, Dustin," she rolled her eyes at him.

"No, no, no! I don't mean it literally, I just meant turn the heat up at

someones house," he told her.

"Okay then, I vote we go to *your* house since you suggested it, and your mom will be at work. Who else agrees?" She asked, and Lucas and Will raised their hands.

Mike wasn't really paying much attention to them.

"Hey," Max shook his shoulder, and he turned to look at her.

"Yeah?"

"We're going to Dustin's house to turn the heating up," she explained bluntly.

"Umm..."

She groaned, "let's just go!" Max pushed the puzzled boy out the door, followed by the rest of the boys.

The kids grabbed their bikes - Max her skateboard - and road the short distance over to Dustin's house (Hawkins was a small town).

Dumping their vehicles once again outside the Henderson home, they all went inside the familiar house.

Dustin ran up to his thermostat. "So, how high up are we turning this shit?" He asked, looking at the rest of them.

Max shoved him out the way and turned it all the way up to 90 degrees.

"Ninety degrees doesn't seem like *that* much," Lucas muttered, looking over his girlfriend's shoulder.

"Trust me, it'll get hotter the longer it's stays on," she replied, stepping away from it.

Since the heat was already on because it was cold outside, it didn't take long for them to start sweating, and discarding their jackets.

They all ended up sat in the Henderson living room,

The gang kept their eyes trained on Mike, waiting for any sign that the heat was bothering him.

But besides looking kind of flustered like them all, he looked vaguely normal.

"Feel anything yet?" Dustin asked, wiping sweat off his forehead.

Mike shrugged.

"No pain or anything?" Will added.

Mike shook his head.

"No, I feel fine other than the fact that it's *hot*," he replied.

"I don't think it's possessed you," Will told him, truthfully.

"We've only been in here like, thirty minutes it hasn't even got that hot yet." Max rolled her eyes at him.

Dustin snickered. "Do you *want* him to be possessed or something, Max?"

"No I don't want him to be possessed, asshat! I just want to be sure!" she exclaimed.

"I don't mind, guys," Mike told them. "I want to be sure too, and even though this is a pain in the butt, I'll deal with it."

The others nodded, and fell silent after that, because even *talking* was proving difficult in this heat.

After another whole hour, and nothing happening, they decided Mike definitely *wasn't* possessed. Max turned the heat back to its original temperature while Mike, Will and Lucas got their stuff together to leave.

"Sorry for leaving you to deal with this heat," Lucas commented to Dustin.

Mike and Will had already left and Max was waiting on Lucas.

Dustin shrugged, "It's fine, I'll just sit outside until it gets cooler in here."

"You sure?" Max asked and he nodded, smiling.

"Alright well, see you later."

The two of them left and started in the same direction as Mike and Will, keeping a little distance behind, talking to one another.

Mike used this opportunity to ask Will something in private.

"When you were possessed... Did it *talk* to you?" Mike asked quietly.

Will looked at him, an eyebrow raised. "Uh, *no*? I just saw images. You know... the now-memories. It's *talking* to you?" Mike nodded, biting his lip.

Will thought for a moment, as they continued walking up the street. "What does it *say*?" he asked, curiously.

Mike took a shaky breath, the cold words still ringing in his head. "I- It said *it's only the beginning*."

"What the hell is *that* supposed to mean?" Will asked, eyes widening, staring intently at his friend.

"I don't know, but I don't want to find out," Mike shuddered.

"What are you losers talking about?" Max demanded loudly, as she and Lucas caught up with them.

"Oh you know..." Will shrugged. "D and D."

Max wrinkled her nose and asked no more; she hated their stupid nerd game (as Will knew).

Max and Will soon parted from the group in the separate directions towards their house. As Lucas and Mike practically lived next door to each other, they kept on walking together.

"Kinda freaky what happened in the café today," Lucas confessed

after a few minutes silence.

Mike nodded, "Yeah, sorry about that."

"Not your fault. At least we know now you're not possessed," Lucas chuckled.

Mike could only smile half-heartedly in response. Everyone else may be a little more optimistic, but they hadn't *heard* the voice.

"Still, seeing the man from your dream. *Weird*," Lucas continued, oblivious to his friend's discomfort. "Maybe you've seen him before without realising."

"Yeah... maybe," *Definitely not*.

Mike could see his house now. "I'll, uh, see you tomorrow at school," he blurted, before dashing towards his home.

Lucas gave a startled "Bye!" At his friend's sudden departure, but didn't think much of it, simply turning up his own driveway towards his house.

Mike opened his front-door and shut it behind him, unaware of the pair of eyes watching him from behind the trees...

"Hey, mom!" He called into the silent hallway. "I'm home."

"Hey, sweetie," she replied from the kitchen. "Did you have a good time?"

"I..." Mike was torn between telling him mum about the incident at Benny's or keeping it a secret.

Biting his lip, he decided not to tell her, and said, "I had fun. We went to the park and I sat on the swings with Will. Then Dustin made him try and ride Max's skateboard and he got mad because he fell into a bush."

"Oh wow, is he okay?" She asked, glancing back at him, from her position at the sink.

"Uh, yeah, he didn't get hurt. Just had a few leaves in his hair."

"Well that's good... Did anything else happen?" She asked, with deliberate slowness and concern.

"Oh, uh, no, we just went to Benny's after."

She nodded. "Well good, I'm glad you had fun. You know, after everything yesterday."

"Yeah, I feel a lot better," he lied. She smiled at him. "I'm gonna go work on a campaign in the basement, if it's okay?"

"Of course, yell if you need me."

He nodded and went down to the basement. He grabbed his supercom and sat down in El's fort.

Once he was situated and comfortable, he pressed the button and said, "Hey, El, are you there?"

He heard a few crackles and then, "Yes, Mike, I'm here."

"Are you okay?" He asked.

"I'm fine. Are *you* okay? What did you do today?"

"We went to the park and Benny's. I just got home." He bit his lip once again, at the mention of Benny's.

"What did you do at the park?" She asked, encouragingly, and a little wistfully.

"I just sat on the swings with Will for a little while. Then Dustin convinced him to try and ride Max's skateboard, so Max came to the swings and we talked a bit."

"Was Will good?"

He chuckled lightly. "Not really. He kept falling off, and the one time he actually started moving, he hit the curb and fell in a bush."

She gasped. "Is he okay?"

"Oh, yeah he's fine. He was mad so that's why we went to Benny's, since he loves it there."

"Did anything else happen?"

He ran a hand through his hair and sighed quietly. He wouldn't-no, couldn't lie to her, so he took a deep breath and began telling her what happened.

"I-I got this cold chill, like I did yesterday but... colder. I felt like someone was watching me so I turned around a-and I saw the man in my dream."

"What man?" She asked. He then tried to explain what happened in his dream last night, the words tumbling out in a sudden frenzy.

"So what happened at Benny's?" El perused.

"His eyes were... they were black. And he smiled, a creepy smile like, like he knew something I didn't. I freaked out and they took me outside and I heard it, it said that it's only the beginning and I saw the... the Mind Flayer." He heard a tiny gasp and he continued, "Then I saw everyone dead and m-myself. I was dead too. I ran back inside and the man was gone, and no one else saw him, only me, the guys and Max did." He knew she didn't really know what to say, so he continued on with the story, explaining how they thought Mike might've been possessed and how they went to Dustin's to turn the heat up to find out if he was or not.

"So you're not possessed?" El asked, slowly.

"I-I don't think so. I doubt it was nearly as hot there as it was when they burned it out of Will though."

"I don't know. But I don't think you're possessed either. I hope you're not."

"I hope not, too."

They talked for probably two hours and it was nearing 9 o'clock. His mom had come downstairs about an hour ago to tell him that she and his dad were going out, so he and Nancy had to watch Holly until

they got back. He put his supercom back in its original spot and went back upstairs, where Nancy was sitting in the living room, eating.

"Holly in bed already?" He asked. She nodded.

"There's dinner on the stove." She said a few seconds later, after swallowing her food. "Don't tell mom I'm eating in here." He chuckled and nodded. He ate a little bit of the food; he had no appetite at all.

Afterwards, he told Nancy goodnight and got ready for bed. He tossed and turned for another hour or so and finally fell asleep.

8. Chapter 8

A message from Phieilly, *PHIEILLYDINYIA CLAIMS NO RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE DELAY OF THIS STORY, THANK U VERY MUCH*, end of message.

Sorry guys, it was my (Brenda) fault! I've been really busy this last week or so and haven't had much time to write! I'm sorry!

For a moment, Mike wasn't sure what had woken him up from his dreamless, deep sleep.

As his eyes adjusted to the pitch blackness, he suddenly realised what it was.

The chill, the very same chill which almost always lead on to something bad.

Although he was under his duvet, and the heating was on, he couldn't block out the coldness; he was pretty sure it was coming from inside of him anyway.

Mike shifted in his bed, teeth clattering, his limbs numb.

And that's when he saw it.

Something that slowed his shivering into frozen shock. Something that made his heart race with terror. Something standing at the foot of his bed, a dark shadow of a man outlined in the dark.

He couldn't breathe, he couldn't move; he could only stare at the figure with wide, fearful eyes and wait for something to happen. If he wasn't so cold, he'd probably be sweating by now.

He was mostly hoping it would just disappear; that is was a phantom of his imagination, a hallucination, or in fact just a dream.

He was dreaming again!

Wasn't he?

Then it moved.

And what was worse was it was moving towards *him*.

Panicking, Mike backed up further against the wall in his bed, choking on his terrified breaths.

The figure emerged from the shadows, leaning towards the petrified boy.

With a crazed smile upon his face.

"Y-Y-You!" Mike voice cracked with horror.

The coal black eyes never left his. "*Hello, Michael*," he calmly spoke.

That same sinister voice.

"Go away!" Mike cried. "Leave me alone!" He was properly sobbing now, refusing to believe this was actually happening. There wasn't a man in his room, there couldn't be.

It was a dream. It was a dream. This wasn't real! *This! Wasn't! Real!*

But it was.

"I'm afraid I can't do that," the man replied, leaning closer. "I've come for my revenge and I'm going to get it."

"I never did anything to you!" Mike pleaded desperately, the wall preventing him from backing any further away. "I don't know who you are! Please leave me alone!"

The man gave a hauntingly dark laugh. "Oh *you* didn't. You didn't do *anything*. But *she* did." His right hand moved slightly, and that's when Mike's eyes fell on something which somehow made him even more terrified; the glint of a large steak knife. "And she's soon going to regret the day she wronged me."

If he wasn't so focused on the weapon, he might have been curious about who the man was talking about.

Mike's heart plummeted as the knife drew nearer towards him. *He was going to be killed. He was going to die.*

Mike shook his head, frantically. "No! Please, no! Please don't!"

"The process is almost complete," the man whispered excitedly, almost to himself.

Mike couldn't comment on that because a few seconds later, he felt a blinding pain in his left arm as the knife penetrated his skin, creating a narrow but deep cut.

Mike yelled out, with a mixture of pain and terror.

In the next moment, his bedroom door suddenly rocketed open and Nancy burst into the room, a gun clutched in her hands.

Both Mike and the man snapped round to look at her.

Nancy gasped in shock at the sight of the man poised over her brother, knife in his hand; she pulled the trigger and fired.

For a split second, her eyes closed as the gunshot filled the air. When she opened them again, the bullet which would have originally gone through the man's shoulder, had sunk in through the wall behind him, leaving a smoking, dark hole in the plaster; the man was nowhere to be seen.

Mike glanced at his sister, with contorted eyes full of fear. "N-Nancy?"

The gun clattered to the floor, her hands covering her mouth. "Oh my god. Mike!" She ran to him, falling onto his bed on her knees, and pulled him into a desperate hug.

Mike clung onto her tightly, sobbing into her shoulder, his frozen shock dying off and being able to start shaking again.

Nancy was in a state of confusion and horror; how the hell had that man gotten into Mike's room? How the hell had he just disappeared like that?

She'd awoken to yelling and unfamiliar voices coming from his room,

and had grabbed her gun for precaution, only to discover her worst fears were true.

Tears were falling down her own face, as she repeatedly reassured Mike, saying "It's okay, you're safe, I've got you," over and over.

After a few minutes, Mike managed to choke out, "Please don't... please don't go!"

Nancy shook her head, hugging him tighter. There was no way she was about to leave him now.

That's when she noticed something wet dripping onto her shoulder. She frowned and pulled back from Mike slightly.

Nancy gasped, "Oh my god, Mike, your arm!"

Mike had forgotten about that until she'd brought it up, and winced, the stinging coming back.

Nancy looked up at him, horror-stricken. "Was that from his...?"

He nodded shakily.

The slight possibility that they had somehow shared a hallucination went out the window; Nancy realised there was no pretending this wasn't actually happening; it was.

What frightened her most was she didn't know what to do about it.

Her common sense kicked in then. "Come on, we need to bandage that right now."

Mike allowed her to guide him out of his bedroom (he wasn't a big fan of staying in there anyway) and followed her down the stairs, clutching his injured arm, still in a state of shock.

And it wasn't fading away either; *that man could literally appear at any moment!*

He glanced nervously through each window and behind each door on their way to the kitchen, the slightest noises or creaks making him

jump with fright.

"D-Don't tell mom or dad," Mike croaked, while he was sat at the table, Nancy busy bandaging up his knife wound.

She looked up at him, frowning slightly. He hadn't said much for the last few minutes. "Why not? Dad, okay, but mom should know! She already knows about the dream."

Mike shook his head, wringing his hands and eyes avoiding hers. "That's... that's not all. I-I saw that man at Benny's earlier today."

"*What?*"

So Mike told her, tears spilling down his cheeks as he recalled the haunting memories.

"It... it talks to you?" Nancy whispered in shock.

"It was in my head," Mike shuddered. "And the man spoke in the same voice while he was in my room earlier."

"Oh Mike..."

It suddenly occurred to Mike that the man hadn't tried to kill him. He'd had more than enough opportunities, but instead he had only sliced his arm slightly.

If he hadn't been so scared, Mike would have probably laughed at such a rubbish attack.

"Why don't you want mom to know?" Nancy asked, quietly.

"She can't help me, and it will only worry her," Mike explained, standing up, and wrapping his arms around himself.

His words made Nancy want to cry again; it wasn't *fair*, he should have to go through with this all alone! He shouldn't have to be going through it at all, and Nancy was at a loss to what was causing this.

Mike looked at his older sister, and murmured, "I don't want to be alone."

"Of course not," Nancy sniffed, taking ahold of his right arm. "You can stay in my bed tonight, okay?"

Mike nodded, as he followed her back upstairs and into her bedroom. "What if he...?" He swallowed. "What if he comes back?"

"I won't let him hurt you," Nancy insisted, and emphasised at the gun she was holding.

Lying in the dark next to Nancy (with all the lights on), Mike had a sickening feeling that if He decided to return, Nancy's gun wasn't going to be enough.

(Given any other day, he might have even been curious to how the hell his sister even had a gun).

Neither of them got any sleep that night, and simply remained lying in silence, eyes open wide and alert.

"Mike, sweetie," his mother called cheerily the next morning, pushing open his bedroom door. "Time get up! You need to get ready for sch-..."

His bed was empty, the duvet on the floor.

Karen frowned, questioningly. She'd already checked the kitchen, and bathroom; he hadn't been in either.

"Mom?" Nancy appeared behind her, and she turned round.

"Hey, honey, have you seen-?"

"H-He's in my bed," Nancy explained slowly. *She'd promised not to tell.*

Karen raised her eyebrows in bewilderment. "Oh, how come?"

"He - um - he had a nightmare last night so..."

Karen nodded and proceeded towards Nancy's room instead.

Nancy stopped her. "And he's n-not feeling well this morning." She

wincing internally; *great*, now her mother was going to be *instantly* concerned, after what had happened that weekend.

Karen continued on and so did Nancy, "It wasn't like the other night. It scared him but it wasn't as bad as that one," Nancy told her in a rush.

"Are you sure?" Karen asked, worriedly looking into the room and noticing Mike was asleep, but Nancy knew better.

Mike was listening to their conversation, but kept his eyes shut, as he felt his mom's eyes burn into him.

"Yeah, just let him sleep for now."

Karen gave her son one final glance, and then turned back to Nancy.

Sighing sadly, she said, "I don't want to leave him alone if he's sick, or after this weekend at all. Do you think you can stay home with him? I have a lot of errands today."

Nancy nodded. "Of course. I don't want him to be alone either."

"Okay, thank you, sweetheart. I'm gonna go get ready and I'll let you know before I leave, okay?" Karen told her, and Nancy nodded again, smiling.

Karen then left to her bedroom and Nancy went back into hers, shutting the door behind her.

"Okay, she's gone now," she quietly reassured her brother.

He opened his eyes and looked at her.

"We're staying home, which you probably already know because you're a nosy little *shit*."

Mike frowned, before starting to laugh. Nancy laughed too, mostly because she was just happy he was laughing.

It didn't take long for his mood to darken again. After a few seconds silence between them, he spoke up. "Nancy?"

She sat on her bed beside him. "Yeah?"

"Do you think it's over now?" he muttered, almost pleadingly.

She shifted closer to him and ran a hand through his hair. "I hope so, Mike. I'm gonna do whatever I can to keep you safe, you hear me?" Her voice was fierce.

He nodded, taking a shaky breath.

The door quietly but quickly burst open as Karen came back in.

Mike quickly shut his eyes, feigning sleep, while Nancy flipped round to face her.

"Okay, I'm off now," Karen explained in a whisper, carrying Holly at her hip.

"Be careful." Nancy whispered back.

"I will. Call dad at the office if you need anything, okay?" Nancy nodded and Karen left, shutting the door back.

"Okay, she's gone again." Nancy told him.

"Duh." He rolled his eyes at her and she flicked him on the head lightly.

She got up and said, "I'm gonna go and deal with the bullet hole in your wall, before mom sees it and freaks out."

He made a face at her, confused for a second, but then nodded.

"Just rest in here for a bit, I'll be right down the hall if you need me." she said as she opened the door. He nodded again, biting his lip.

Entering his room, she thought for a bit, the gaping hole staring guiltily back at her. And then she had an idea.

Nancy took the tack's out of each corner of his Ghostbusters poster, and moved the poster over the hole, putting the tack's back in place.

And then her heart skipped a beat, as she heard a familiar scream

coming from her room.

He's back, was her first and only thought, and she bolted back through the door, fear coursing through her. The one time she'd left her gun behind! *Shit!*

"MIKE!" she shrieked, throwing the door back open.

At first, she saw nothing out of the ordinary. There was no man, just Mike screaming and fighting with her duvet covers, like he was trying to get out as quickly as possible.

"Mike, what's wrong?" She demanded urgently, grabbing hold of him.

"The-the-" Mike stammered, terrified, backing up so much, Nancy had to hold onto him to stop him falling off the end of the bed. "The... b-bed is..."

Nancy frowned in confusion, staring in the direction he was pointing.

Then she noticed something vaguely dark staining the pillow.

Slowly, Nancy grabbed the duvet and peeled it away from the sheets.

She gasped in horror, as she revealed a pool of black liquid upon the mattress.

"What the hell..." she mouthed.

"Nancy," Mike gulped, and she looked back over at him.

The black substance had coated the entire pyjama sleeve of his left arm, and was soaking most profusely from the no-longer-white bandage that was still on him.

"Oh, god," Nancy wished she had something more reassuring to say, but in all honesty, she was terrified.

But her terror was nothing compared to Mike's, clouding over in his eyes.

"Mike?" Nancy whispered cautiously, before his eyes rolled back into

his head and he passed out. "*Mike!*"

9. Chapter 9

So, BCI here, and I'm absolute shit when it comes to working on this story. I'm sadly the busiest freaking person I stg XD. Sorry for the long wait, so here's an extra long chapter!

Phieilly here, just wanted to say, shoutout to MeetMeAtTheQuarry for giving me inspiration for this chapter!

He heard a voice distantly calling out to him, but he wasn't able to focus on it straight away; his mind was somewhere between awake and unconscious.

"Mike! Mike! Come on, wake up!" Nancy shook his shoulders, desperately, starting to panic when he stayed motionless. "Damn it, wake up!"

His eyebrows furrowed and scrunched his nose up, trying to soothe his pounding headache. He slowly opened his eyes and looked at her through blurry vision.

"What?" he mumbled, blinking a couple times. For a few fleeting moments, he forgot the reason why he had just blacked out.

"What the hell Mike! You just passed out!"

"I did?" The memories were coming back now. He looked down at the black liquid soaking his sleeve.

"Yeah, are you alright?" she demanded, urgently.

No. He shrugged, sitting upright and bringing up a hand up to rub his eyes. Nancy kept ahold of his shoulders, in case he passed out again.

"Okay, okay, I need to call Hopper," she insisted shakily, when she was sure he wasn't going to fall off the bed again. "He can help."

"No!" Mike shook his head vigorously. *No one could know.*

"Why the hell not, Mike? This is insane!" Nancy hissed, pulling herself

off the bed, and striding towards the door.

"It's fine. It's just a cut! You don't need to call him." Mike pleaded, standing up and following her.

Nancy spun around to face him in a panicked fury. "Just a cut? *Just a cut?* Mike, your blood is *black!* That's not normal," she argued. "That man in your room was *not normal!* We *need* to call Hopper!" She grabbed the door handle and threw it open.

"No," Mike's voice rang out coldy from behind her.

In the next second, he grabbed her arm tightly.

"Mike, I-" Nancy looked back at him. Her sentence was cut short when she noticed his eyes were pure black, staring at her with a look of rage.

Her eyes widened and tried to pull her arm away from him, but he squeezed tighter. "Mike, let me go. Mike... Mike, you're hurting me!"

Mike ignored her, keeping a firm grip on her. A few moments passed while her heart steadily speeded up with fear.

He eventually did let go and blinked, his eyes back to their normal brown. He made a face, like he was confused.

"W-what's hurting you?" He asked, tilting his head to the side. It was her expression that confused him the most; she had already been scared before, of the blood, of the man, but now she was looking at *him*, with the exact same fear.

"Mike..." She bit her lip. "You grabbed my arm when I said I was gonna call Hopper. You... don't remember?"

He shook his head slowly, feeling a mixture of guilt and terror. "Nancy, I'm so sorry. I don't know what hap-"

"I-It's okay," she interrupted, jolting forward as if to hug him. She hesitated before stepping back, thinking better of it. Mike couldn't say the motion didn't hurt him just a little bit. "Stay here, I'm gonna go call him."

Nancy all but ran out of her room, downstairs, and to the phone, where she quickly dialed the number. "Come on, pick up, pick up," she muttered to herself, hearing nothing but the distant ringing. She was about to give up and call again when a gruff voice answered.

"Hello?"

"Hopper, thank God."

"Shouldn't you be in school, kid?"

"Yeah, but mom asked me to stay home. Something's going on with Mike! More than just him passing out."

"What happened?" His voice was suddenly on alert.

"Just... Just come over here, okay? It's urgent." She saw Mike walk past her through the corner of her eye, but didn't acknowledge it straight away. "Really urgent! I don't know what to do..."

She slowly turned around then, Hopper's voice of pursuing his 'what happened' question fading out of hearing. Nancy could only focus on the kitchen knife that Mike was holding.

Neither of them moved, as her worried eyes stared into his defiant ones. Nancy watched him suddenly drag the knife across his palm, hissing out in pain.

"Mike!" She exclaimed, her paralysis breaking, and dropped the phone. He stared at the cut in his shaking hand, which was oozing black, not red, and dropped the knife.

"It's black too, Nancy! What the hell, why is it black?" He yelled, beginning to freak out. Nancy faintly heard Hopper yelling her name on the phone, swinging loosely on its cord. She grabbed it again.

"Get over here, NOW!" she screamed the last word and slammed the phone down, rushing over to Mike. She reached for his hand and he backed away, teartracks staining his face.

"No, no, no. I don't want to hurt you again," his voice cracked, eyes wide and filled with panic.

"You *won't* hurt me, Mike. L-Let me help you. *Please*."

She was scared of him. He shook his head, breathing deeply.

"Mike..." Nancy pleaded. "It's okay, we'll fix this-"

"You can't!" Mike yelled at her, all sense of logic breaking lose. "You can't do anything, and I-I can't stay here anymore!"

"What are you talking about?"

"I'm sorry, Nancy."

"Sorry? Why are you-?" Mike grabbed his shoes and bolted towards the front door. "MIKE! Where are you going? Come back!"

She ran after him, but got as far as the front yard before realising she wasn't going to catch up. Her brother was already halfway down the street.

She watched him run away with an aching heart; this was bad. This was *really* bad.

Hopper slowly clicked the phone back onto the receiver, exhaling through his nose.

El stood behind him anxiously, entering the room after overhearing his intense phone call. Her eavesdropping hadn't told her very much. "Who was that?" she asked, curiously. They didn't get many phone calls.

Hopper rubbed the bridge of his nose. "Kid, I gotta go. I'm sorry."

"W-What? Where?" she demanded, while he left to fetch his jacket.

"I just..." Hopper was on the fence between telling her and keeping it a secret. If he told her, she'd want to come. But Nancy's call had been considerably vague, therefore he didn't know how safe it currently was at her house, and more importantly, how safe it was for *El*.

But not telling her? Was that right? He knew enough to know Mike

was involved. And El and Mike... *yep*, he was definitely telling her.

"Something's wrong with Mike," he stated, whilst tying up his shoelaces.

As he'd expected, El's eyes widened in horror, growing with sudden concern. "I... *what's* wrong?" Her voice had become high-pitched.

"No idea, but I have to leave right now," Hopper replied, shrugging on his jacket. For some reason, he wasn't able to look her in the eye. Maybe because he knew what was coming.

"Well, I-I'm coming!" El insisted nervously but fiercely, racing to grab her *own* jacket.

"No!" Hopper yelled after her, almost straight away. *God dammit, why was he even bothering?* "It might not be *safe*, El. And I'm not dragging you into a unknown warzone, okay? I'm sure Mike is fine-"

"You don't know that," El muttered darkly.

Hopper merely scoffed and pulled open the creaky front door.

It slammed shut again with a bang making him jump backwards.

"For God's sake, El, I don't have time for this!" he shouted at the girl wiping her nose before the blood could fall.

"Then let me come!" she hissed threateningly.

"El-"

"Let me come! *Let me see him!*"

Ten minutes later, Hopper was driving speedily through the streets of Hawkins, a edgy El sat beside him.

She was jumping out the car before it had even stopped, bounding up to the front door of the Wheeler residence and banging loudly.

Nancy opened it up almost immediately, her face appearing to be in

the middle of a crying episode. Her eyes fell on the young girl in front of her.

"Oh El!" she sobbed, pulling her in for a tight hug. "I tried to stop him, but he- he..."

"Kid, what happened?" Hopper had caught up now, stood behind El, eyebrows creased with worry.

Nancy skipped the whole "come in" and "you may want to sit down" charade and told them directly what had happened, starting with the insane man that had a bullet go straight through him and into the wall in his room, to Mike running away.

"He just... He just flipped out on me, I don't know what happened. The blood or whatever was just pitch black. It looked like *tar* or something." She was shaking so bad she had to lean against the door frame to keep from falling. "He just said he can't do this anymore and ran."

"Which way did he go?" Hopper asked pressingly. *Maybe they could follow him.* Nancy pointed in the direction he ran off in, trying to keep her hand from rattling with panic.

El shot Hopper one last doleful look before she took off in that direction.

"El!" he roared after her, but she ignored them.

If she was right, she had no time to waste.

"Damn it!" Hopper exclaimed, while Nancy held her face in her hands.

El was almost certain she knew where Mike had gone. Something pulled at her heart like a compass, as if she was feeling his aura.

Maybe it was just rushed guessing, but she decided to act upon the hunch, so she sprinted straight for the quarry. She didn't stop, ignoring the stitch in her side, heart exhilarating, shoes slamming hard into the gravel and soil as she ran.

It surprised her she remembered the way so well, having been there only once.

She raced through the trees, tripping and stumbling, running as fast as she possibly could, hoping and praying Mike was there.

Somewhere deep in the remote woods that surrounded the small town of Hawkins, the terrified boy dropped to the bracken beneath him, shaking arms clasped around his knees, curly mop of black hair buried inside them.

He shook with uncontrollable sobs, but not because of the low temperature in the air - he could hardly feel the cold. In truth, he'd gone numb; the chill was always there anyway. It was fear; fear of the unknown, fear of the danger.

Small black droplets dripped from his hand and onto the undergrowth beneath him. They were unexplainable... and they were terrifying. *Nothing made any sense!* And that Man... could appear at any minute. He shuddered.

And then a thought occurred.

Mike wiped his tears furiously. Sitting here in the forest wasn't going to fix anything! He wasn't going to let this mysterious Man haunting his dreams and hallucinations do whatever the hell he pleased!

Mike unsteadily stood up, taking a shuddering breath which he wished had come out a little more bravely. Maybe the Man could hear him at this very moment...

"HEY!" Mike bellowed loudly, into the desolate surrounding trees as assuredly as he could. "I-IF YOU CAN HEAR ME, SHOW YOURSELF! I'M NOT AF-FRAID OF YOU!" Mike internally winced at his pitiful stutter.

One or two minutes went by, and nothing happened, except the cool breeze occasionally blowing against his hair and rustling of leaves around him.

Mike swallowed. *Guess he was alone then.*

And then,

Hot white pain slammed into his eyes. Mike cried out, staggering backwards, hands flying up to his face.

And then a different scene erupted in his line of sight.

It was the quarry.

It was the Man.

And it was El.

Her terrified brown eyes bore into his, a cry of "Mike!" escaping her lips.

The man held her firmly against him, the large knife poised at her neck.

...Just like in his dream.

"NO!" Mike roared, bolting towards her.

He tripped on a root that definitely wasn't there and his face slammed into the dirt with a thud.

His head snapped up again straight away in panic... only to find he was back in the middle of the woods, with no El in sight.

Terror rioted through him, as Mike sprinted in the direction of the quarry, screaming "EL!" at the top of his lungs.

That had been no dream.

He knew she was there, she was in trouble, and he needed to get there as fast as possible.

Please don't let me be too late, he pleaded with whomever might be listening.

He reached the edge of the woods and skidded to a halt.

His vision had been correct, image for image.

"Nice of you to join us," the Man sneered at him, tightening the knife against El's neck. She whimpered. It was definitely the same Man. And this time, Mike *knew* it was real. More real than ever.

"Please," Mike raised his arms in somewhat surrender. "Let her go."

The Man grinned, cynically. "You want her back? *Okay*."

To Mike's astonishment, he readily pulled the knife away from El, leaving her to stagger away from him gasping, unharmed.

"El!" Mike ran towards the girl he loved, not even questioning the Man's actions, all thoughts on her.

He hands reached out to hers... and his intent of catching her in his arms floundered as her body disintegrated in a cloud of smoke, upon his touch.

Mike stared down at his empty hands in horror while the man cackled in front of him.

"Well, that was fun, wasn't it?" The Man chortled, significantly pleased with his created illusion, brandishing the knife he still held.

Mike stood up to face him with angry tears in his eyes. "What the hell do you want?" the young boy demanded with as much confidence as he could muster. He was relieved El wasn't here after all, but that meant he had walked straight into a trap. And he had no idea what was about to happen.

Neither of them noticed El - the *real* El - standing beside the woodland, watching the scene unfold in front of her, having finally reached her destination.

She had been correct. Mike was here. But not as she had expected.

She saw that Mike was standing face to face with the creepiest guy El had *ever* seen. He was tall, towering over Mike, a devious smile on his face, eyes black as coal.

She saw a knife in the man's hand first, and then saw the black liquid

dripping down from Mike's hand off his fingers.

Countless questions raced through her head, while she pondered whether to make her presence known or not.

She tried to be as quiet as possible as she made her way towards them. Every conclusion was pointing to this Man being a threat, but she didn't know for sure. Then *of course* she stepped on a twig and it snapped, causing them both to look at her. Mike's eyes widened.

"El, no! Stop!" he exclaimed, a hand braced out in her direction, warningly. She halted immediately, breath caught with fear.

The man's smile grew impossibly bigger upon seeing her.

"Oh, El," he sang, taking a step towards her. "Oh, *El!* You are just in time to see the final showdown! Aren't you excited?"

He waved the knife again, laughing to himself as he walked closer to her.

Stop him! El thought wildly. *Blast him off the quarry! Snap his neck!*

But she couldn't. She could only stand there like a sitting duck, her legs jelly, eyes fixed on his. And *why* she couldn't move, El didn't know. She could only watch as the Man stepped evermore closer.

She was still far away, thankfully, because Mike probably wouldn't have been able to do what he did next. As the Man swung the knife around casually, Mike screamed and he lunged at him, acting on instinct to protect El.

The knife, which the Man had so conveniently been holding up at just the right angle, *plunged* into his chest, as Mike collided with it, handle-deep. A killer blow.

Mike snatched his hand away, horrified, as the coal-black eyes met his, his life inside them growing distant.

The Man managed a faint trace of a smile, before he sank to the ground with a groan, and then stopped moving all together, the knife still sprouting from his body, sickeningly.

Mike stared in shock at what he had just done. He looked down at his shaking hands with despair. Please don't let this be real...

El gave a jolt as the feeling returned to her body; she was able to *move* again!

"Mike!" she shrieked, shooting towards the terrified boy.

She got half way before a cloud of black smoke exploded from the now-dead Man, forcing her backwards in a sudden burst of energy. She hit the floor with a grunt, the air knocked out of her lungs.

She heard a blood-curdling yell, and then it was over as quickly as it had started, the sudden smoke clearing the air.

She coughed and gently got up, trying to regain her breath.

The man's body had somehow disappeared, and Mike was lying on the ground, sobbing into his hands.

"M-Mike!" She succeeded in running over to him this time, dropping to her knees beside the anguished boy. "Mike, it's okay, he's gone!"

"El, I'm s-sorry!" Mike wept. "I'm the monster. *I'm the monster.*"

El smiled and shook her head, as tears dropped down her cheeks, repeating the same words back to him as he had said to her. "No, Mike, you're *not* the m-"

"No," Mike's voice suddenly changed; it was a harsh, flat deepness. And then he opened his eyes for the first time, staring right up at El. They were coal-Black. She gasped. "*I am* the monster."

His hand shot up and grabbed her round the throat.

She choked, unwilling to hurt him, but even though her nose started to bleed, her powers couldn't force his hand off her. No matter how hard she pushed her abilities, his finger stayed solidly locked in place.

Her vision was starting to blur from lack of oxygen, as he stood up, dragging her with him.

She stared into his black eyes, and saw no sign of Mike being in them.

There was no warmth, no light, only darkness.

The Mike she knew was gone.

In his place was an evil being, intent on hurting her.

Hurting her in the most vilest way possible.

Mike had stared up as the black smoke rapidly traveled towards him.

He was powerless to slow it down, powerless to destroy it.

Powerless to stop it engulfing his body as the suffocating phantom seeped into his soul.

A mixture of coldness, pain, and numbness overwhelmed in, starting from the wound in his arm. He tried crying out but his voice was cut off.

And then he *too* was cut off, as if his very existence had suddenly snapped.

But there was now someone else inside with him. Someone pulling his strings like a puppet.

He was no longer in control, but he could still *feel*.

He could feel his eyes blinking and focusing.

He could feel his lips stretched into a crazed smile.

He could feel his fingers closed tightly around the throat of the girl he loved.

He could feel energy radiating off him, an energy that overpowered El's telekinesis by miles.

He could feel *everything*, but could do nothing.

It was rock against paper, and he was the latter.

He was forced to stare into her terrified, brown eyes, as he slowly killed her.

Mike laughed in a voice that wasn't his voice. "You foolish girl," he muttered lowly. "Thought you'd sealed me off from your precious world. Thought it would be that *easy*," he stretched out each word with a mocking tone.

His hand let her go and she fell to the ground, gasping for breath.

Mike desperately wanted to run to her, hold her, comfort her, cry, scream - *anything* but stand there, laughing at her. *Rock against paper. Rock against paper.*

"You see, I had another way in," Mike continued, almost enjoying himself. "I couldn't be here physically, but my *conscience* certainly could."

El glared up at him, eyes glistening. She didn't think her voice would work through her damaged throat right now, so she stayed silent.

"Being able to take over the mind of another being is... *exhilarating*." Mike - the *Demon* turned away from her slightly, pacing slowly back and forth in front of her. She was suddenly aware of the knife - that had been inside the Man's chest only moments ago - he was now twirling casually in his hands, the silver blade coated in an inky-black substance.

"You see," he muttered thoughtfully, thinking carefully. "I made a big mistake while I was possessing your friend, *Will*. You could say I... carried it out in a rush. I wasn't *fully* in control of him. He found a way around it, the little menace. But *this*," he gestured down at Mike's form. "This has taken *months*. Months of gaining power. Months of finding stability. At last, all I needed was for him to drive this knife through that useless soul, which he did very *spectacularly*, might I add. And now," the Demon smirked at El in a very unlike-Mike way. "It's finally complete."

Waves of guilt rushed over the young girl, as she realised Mike had

warned her about this. She'd seen it happening with her very own eyes, only days ago, yet she had done *nothing*, hoping it would go away instead. She'd been so stupid! And now? Now it was too late.

El furiously swallowed down the aching and opened her mouth. "Why did you do it?" she wheezed, painfully, still kneeling on the rocky ground in exhaustion. "Why not... why not *me*?"

The Demon laughed. "This is *all* because of you, girl! In all my years, no one ever accomplished in winning me over. Until *you*. After what you *did to me*, I knew I couldn't let you get away with it. But I also didn't want to kill you. No, no, much too easy."

El froze, realisation crashing over her. Terrifying, alarming realisation. She should have known, sooner.

"You're the Mind Flayer," she croaked.

Mike was listening to their conversation in forced silence. El's words sent a mental chill through his body. It was the *Mind Flayer* controlling his every move? He wanted to be sick.

The Demon was directly in front of her now, staring down at the girl in pure hatred. "Is *that* what you call me? Haha, how creative. Alright then. Yes. I'm the Mind Flayer. Surprise!" He laughed again, making El's blood boil. "As I said, I wasn't going to kill you. So, instead I *watched* you. Day after day. I learned your strengths, I learned your..." His grin stretched out again. "...weaknesses."

She couldn't hold it back anymore. "Please!" El sobbed. "Please don't hurt him!" Seeing Mike like this was tearing her apart. "This is *my* fault, not his! J-Just hurt me instead!"

El, I'm here! Mike was desperate to reassure her. *I'm right here!* But it was pointless, his very existence tied up inside this *monster*.

"Oh," the Demon chuckled hysterically, Mike's body rocking with laughter. "But this is the best way to hurt you... and you know it."

He waved the knife around, too carelessly for El's liking. "I hope you know, that this is *all* your fault."

The Mind Flayer made a sudden stride towards the edge of the quarry.

"NO!" El screamed, trying to force herself off the ground. Some invisible force slammed her back into it.

Mike's steady facade of the Demon was terrifyingly comfortable, while standing on the edge of the minacious cliff and staring down at the cold, deadly water below, the grin still in place on his face.

But inside, Mike was screaming. He couldn't step away, or even close his eyes, being forced to stare in whatever direction the Demon chose.

God, he couldn't deal with cliff heights. The Demon stepped closer, cackling. *No, no, not again!*

El watched with crestfallen horror as the Demon... *Mike* took one final step and pivoted over the edge, dropping like a bag of rocks.

10. Chapter 10

So, uh, hey guys! It's been a long while eh? I'm sorry! (This is BCI btw) We would have had this out like three weeks ago but my computer died on me and I didn't have any other way to work on it. We won't take so long for the next chapter!

Mhm, I'mma hold you to that, B - (*Phieilly here*) - So anyway I Hope u guys enjoy the chapter! :)

She was fairly sure she was screaming, but could hardly hear herself. Fear was like a siren ringing in her ears, blocking out all other noise. She didn't realize she could move again for one or two seconds.

Feeling returned once again, but this time, no hope came with it.

El scrambled to her feet in a frenzy, running to the edge of the cliff and peering over, her heart in her mouth.

About two thirds down the rocky slope, a cloud of black smoke drifted carelessly in the air, slowly fading away. There were no ripples in the water below. Her guess was this Demon... *Mind Flayer* could teleport... and it had taken Mike with him. Where he was now, was a mystery.

El let out a deep breath, not realizing she'd been holding it. *He was still alive*. Or was he?... Was Mike still in there? She couldn't - she *couldn't* - let him be... She fell to her knees, cries wracking her body.

"No, Mike, no!" she sobbed. "MIIIKE!" She buried her face in her hands as she broke down. It was all her fault.

All her fault.

Will stared anxiously at the empty desk beside him, repeatedly wiping his clammy hands dry on his jeans.

Something wasn't right, that was what his brain kept telling him. Why *wasn't* Mike in school? He'd seemed fine yesterday!

What was reassuring and disturbing at the same time; Will didn't appear to be the only one who was worried either - Lucas was doodling distractly in his book instead of taking notes, and Dustin was staring off into space, paying no attention whatsoever to Mr Clarke with his usual intense fascination.

Will was pretty sure the current topic was radioactivity which might have been fun if it had been a different day, but after everything that's happened recently, he couldn't shake the unnatural feeling of dread.

He kept glancing at the door, just waiting for Mike to *maybe* walk in late, but he figured that wasn't the case. What would have happened to make him *this* late to class?

His thoughts were interrupted by the bell ringing, and he scrambled to shove his books and equipment back into his bag, just like Dustin and Lucas, who hadn't realized the time either.

"Where the hell is Mike?" Dustin asked as the trio walked out of the classroom, oblivious kids bustling around them. The three boys paid them no attention. "Have either of you talked to him?"

"Does it *look* like we've talked to him?" Lucas asked in exasperation, making a big show of gesturing dramatically round him. They'd stopped in the hallway to talk.

Dustin rolled his eyes and flipped him off.

"I have a bad feeling, guys," Will said, ignoring their banter and biting his lip as he looked at both of them. "*Especially* after what's happened, with his dream and all."

"Do you think we should check on him?" Lucas asked. Second period was with Miss Grundy anyway, and he didn't think he had the correct tolerance levels to be dealing with *her* today.

"What?" Dustin raised his eyebrows at his friend. "*Now?*"

Lucas shrugged, "It wouldn't hurt."

"So, just skip second period?"

"...No, Dustin, I have a time machine we can use," Lucas deadpanned.
"Of course skip second period, asshole!"

"I agree with Lucas," Will butted in, firmly. "And besides, any other time I think you'd be fine with it." He gave Dustin a pointed look.

"Well yeah, I just wish it wasn't to check on Mike. What if something really bad has happened?" he said, all laughter dying off on his face.

"Well, we won't know until we find out," Lucas pointed out, "Let's go."

On their way towards the doors, a flash of red hair caught Lucas' eye. He quickly stopped the others, before back-tracking a bit and grabbing Max by the arm and pulling her *and* her skateboard with him.

"Whoa, Stalker, what's the deal?" she asked, dropping her skateboard back to the floor and rolling along with him. He seemed to be walking at a very intense pace.

"We're going to Mike's to check on him," Dustin explained as the rest of them followed the couple. She looked over her shoulder raised an eyebrow at him.

"I have a bad feeling," Will told her. "Something just feels off."

"Oh."

The boys and Max couldn't see any reason to take their time, as they were all too caught up in nerves. So instead, they pelted over to the Wheeler residence at full speed on their bikes, Max somehow managing to keep up on her skateboard.

Upon arrival, they dropped their vehicles carelessly on the lawn and ran up to the house. Dustin reached it first and banged noisily on the door, the rest waiting anxiously behind him.

They were mildly surprised when *Hopper* answered the door for them,

looking rather distressed and distracted.

"What are you doing here?" Max asked.

"What are *you* doing here?" Hopper repeated, crossing his arms, glaring suspiciously at the four kids. "You should be at school right now."

"Shouldn't *you* be at work?" the curly-haired boy retorted.

"Okay first off, you're not the adult here, kid," he scowled at Dustin. "And I *am* doing my job. Making sure you don't get yourselves killed is one of my main priorities. So, with that said, get your asses back to school." He went to shut the door but Lucas stepped up to put his foot between the door and the frame.

"We're here to check on our friend," he stated fiercely. "And we're not leaving until we know he's okay." Hopper sighed and ran a hand over his face.

"Let them in, Hop," they heard Nancy's voice say softly. "They won't leave until we tell them. They need to know."

"Know what?" Will asked as Hopper let out a defeated sigh and stepped aside and let them in. "Where's Mike?"

"He's... not here," Nancy muttered, arms folded defensively, stood behind Hopper. She looked visibly distraught, her eyes red and puffy, her hair still a mess.

"What do you mean he's not here?" Dustin asked, as they all piled inside the house, Will shutting the door behind them. Each of them were starting to get bad vibes.

That was a lie - the bad vibes had started up quite a few hours ago.

"It means exactly what she said, kid," Hopper rolled his eyes in frustration.

"Wait, where's El? I figure if you're here for Mike, she would be too," Max piped up, carefully.

"Uh, well..." Hopper scratched the back of his neck. *Here we go...*
"She's not here either."

"What... *happened?*" Lucas demanded, narrowing his eyes at the guilty-looking pair.

Hopper and Nancy looked at each other with worry, before gradually confiding each side of their story to the group.

The scenery had changed as quickly as a spark.

One second, Mike had been falling to his worst-feared death, believing all hope was lost. And then suddenly, his feet (which he still had no control of) were stood on solid ground.

He felt like his heart should be pounding at one hundred miles per hour, but it stayed strangely calm, as the Mind Flayer walked deliberately slowly, whistling, with their (*his*) hands behind their back.

The Mind Flayer's wasn't giving Mike's eyes much of a chance to explore his surroundings, choosing to stare straight ahead. But he still saw the white-washed walls and the polished floor, of the corridor he was walking down. A desolate, empty corridor where the silence was only interrupted by his loud, echoing footsteps.

Still, Mike recognised it instantly; the place that had shut down and been abandoned months ago, the place where El had spent the first twelve years of her life.

Why am I at the lab? he speculated, with a hint of fear.

The Mind Flayer didn't say anything out loud, and Mike wondered if He could even hear him at all. Or could He?

Either the Mind Flayer could hear his every thought, and he was left with no privacy. *Or* he was trapped inside something where no one could *ever* hear him again, where his existence would never be known: a passenger stuck inside this *Demon* forever.

Both ideas were equally as terrifying.

After the explanations of Nancy and Hopper had eventually died down, the kids were at a loss for words. They weren't sure how to react, knowing their dread had been confirmed; Mike definitely wasn't alright, and he and El had now disappeared to who-knows-where.

"Well, why are you here instead of out there looking for them?" Max snapped, hotly, breaking the awkward silence.

"We wouldn't know where to start," Hopper explained sadly, while Nancy tried to prevent fresh tears falling. "The town's pretty big, kid."

"So you've *no* idea where they could be?" Instead of waiting for an answer, Max punched the wall beside her with a frustrated grunt of "*Dammit!*"

Lucas grabbed her hand in his.

Everyone seemed to be on edge now. But Dustin had started to form a theory in his head, acting purely on instinct. He ran a hand through his hair. "I might."

"What?" Will asked, his friends all turning to look at him.

"I might know where they are."

The Mind Flayer had been silently pacing the corridors of Hawkins Lab for... Mike could only assume *hours*. And although Mike had no control over his physical movement, he could still think perfectly well. Or at least as well as he *could* through his fixed state of shock. His dominant thought tended to be, *I'm terrified, I'm terrified, I'm terrified, I'm terrified*, over and over.

But El had crept in there along the way, as well as his family... his friends... Everyone that had recently been ripped away from him due to this... '*Problem*' seemed to be a petty way to describe his unique situation.

So it was certainly quite a surprise when the Mind Flayer suddenly... stopped, Mike's legs abruptly rigid.

Mike felt his grin stretch out again, before the Mind Flayer took a deep dramatic breath through him (it only occurred to Mike that he hadn't consumed - or needed - any oxygen throughout this entire tour of the Lab).

"Well," The Mind Flayer spoke up, jovially, using Mike's mouth. "I guess it's time for the second part of my plan, don't you agree?"

You can hear me? The question bolted through Mike's head before he could stop it.

The Demon didn't reply. All that followed was a cloud of black smoke appearing from nowhere, thwarting his vision in a sudden burst.

El woke up to the sound of distant, yet loud voices echoing throughout the room she was in. They sounded like they were trying to be quiet, but failing badly. She groaned weakly, hesitant to open her eyes.

"She's waking up!" a voice whisper-yelled. She slowly opened her eyes and blinked a couple times, taking in the darkness around her. A light suddenly flicked on and she flinched, her eyes snapping closed again at the light flooding her vision.

"You scared her, dipshit!" Lucas exclaimed, angrily.

"Sorry, El," Dustin abjectly hissed.

"Well, turn it off!"

"*You* turn it off! She needs to get used to the light," Dustin argued back.

"Boys, hush," Nancy snapped, glaring at them. "Dustin, turn the light off. There's enough light coming from over there." She nodded her head towards the small kitchen. He grumbled and flicked it back off.

El opened her eyes again and saw the faces of her friends staring down at her with concern, plus Hopper and Nancy standing further back.

"What happened?" she croaked, recognising that she was back in the cabin, lying on the familiar couch.

"You tell us," Hopper spoke up, monotonically. "We found you at the quarry cliff, passed out." It really had been a disturbing sight.

El gradually sat up, Will putting a hand on her back to support her. She looked steadily at Hopper with growing confusion, until everything came rushing back to her in one big flurry. Her hand flew up to her mouth, taking in a shuddering breath as she remembered what had happened only hours ago.

"Oh my God," she whispered, almost brokenly. "Mike..." Her voice cracked on his name.

"Mike? What happened?" Nancy demanded, her head snapping up to look at the forlorn girl, after hearing her brother being mentioned.

"I...the man? He...He had a knife and was gonna hurt Mike," she managed to choke out after a minute or two. Her words sent chills down everyone's spines. She was leaning heavily on Will now, unable to hold it together.

"Where is Mike now?" Hopper asked, slowly.

"I-I don't know," she wept, letting the tears openly fall down her cheeks.

"You don't know?" Lucas asked, with a hint of fear. "What exactly happened up there, El?"

"The... The *Mind Flayer*," she whispered to herself, so quietly, that only Will was able to hear her.

"What?" Nancy demanded, dropping to her knees in front of her to listen better. "What did you say, El?"

Will turned to look at them all, his eyes growing wide with horror. "The Mind Flayer," he repeated for her, the words sounding vile in his mouth.

Hopper ended up taking Nancy home a while after El had finally told them about Mike, and she could hardly sit still as she waited for her mom to get back home. The boys and Max had stayed with El, outright refusing to go back to school.

Nancy went over what she was going to tell her in her head probably a hundred times. She couldn't keep still, so she either paced in front of the front door or sat at the kitchen table, tapping her fingers repeatedly, in the same pattern.

Mom, Mike is possessed by the Mind Flayer thing that possessed Will back in November and now we have no idea where he is- No, that's too forward and too fast.

Mom, something happened with Mike... he... he's possessed by some kind of black smoke demon and is bleeding black blood instead of red- Oh crap, she's home.

Nancy stood from her spot at the table and slowly made her way into the hall, where Karen was closing the front door, a sleeping Holly in her arms.

"I'm gonna put her down and then come make you and Mike a snack," she told Nancy, without hardly looking at her. Nancy just nodded and wringed her hands as she stood, waiting for Karen to come back down.

She did and Nancy was hardly able to keep it together. Karen stilled when she saw how upset Nancy was.

"What is it?"

"Mike..." she whispered. Karen looked back up the stairs and went to take a step up but Nancy stopped her. "He's not here. Something happened, mom, something *terrible*."

Those words brought back memories of when everything else began and she suddenly burst out crying.

"Oh, honey!" Karen pulled her in and hugged her tightly. It took a moment or two for Nancy to stop shaking with sobs and calm down long enough to tell her mother what had happened.

And it was only going to get worse.